

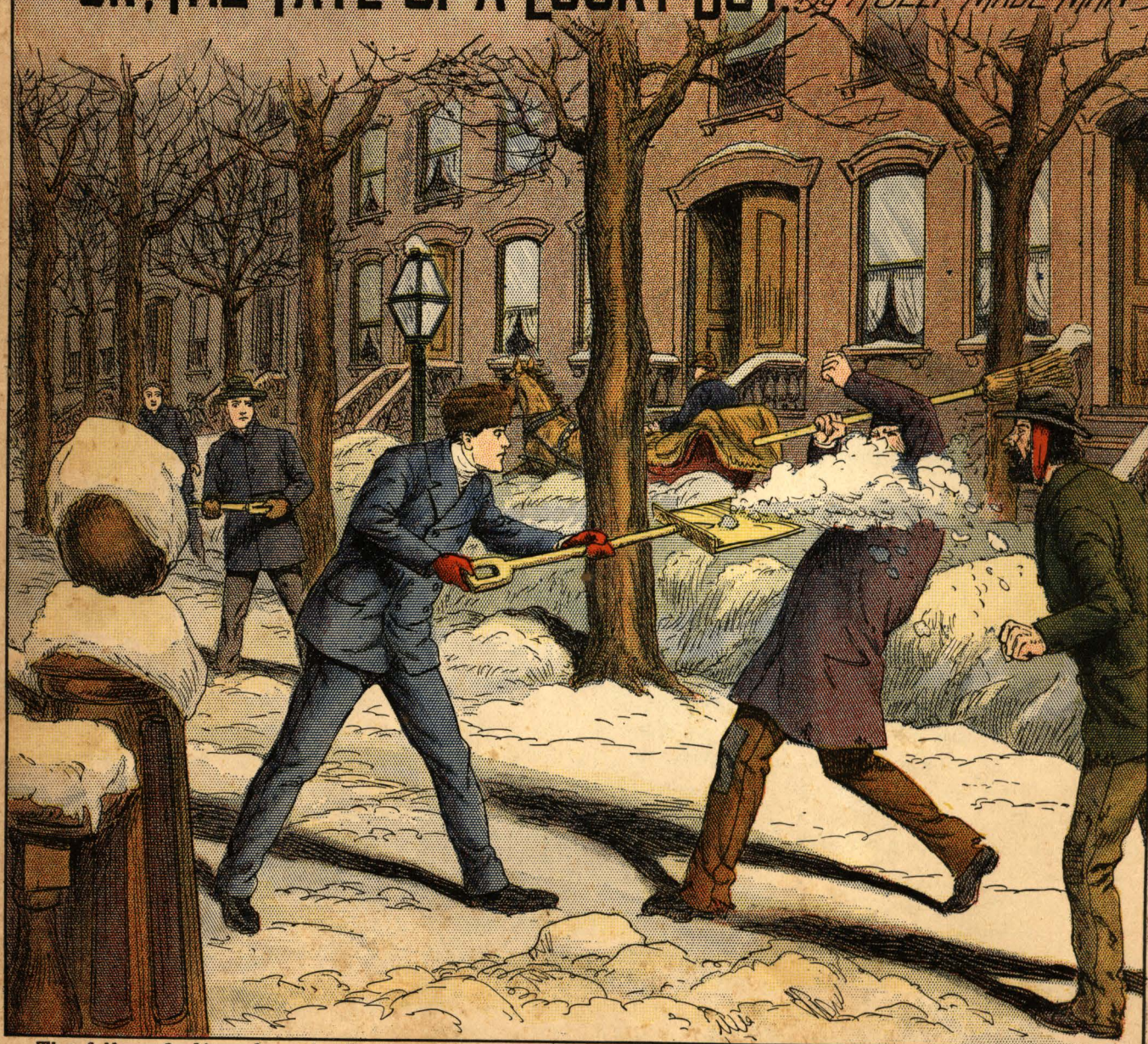
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# FAME AND FORTUNE WEEKLY.

STORIES OF BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY.

## PUSHING IT THROUGH; OR, THE FATE OF A LUCKY BOY. *By A SELF-MADE MAN*



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# Fame and Fortune Weekly

## STORIES OF BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY

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# Pushing It Through;

OR,

## THE FATE OF A LUCKY BOY.

By A SELF-MADE MAN.

### CHAPTER I.

#### JASPER HAVERSTRAW MAKES TWO ENEMIES AND A FRIEND.

"What yer doin' here?" snarled an unpleasant voice in Jasper Haverstraw's ear.

The boy, pleasant-featured and stalwart in build, rather poorly attired, was in the act of lifting a shovelful of snow from the lower step of a high-stooped private house.

He paused, turned around and regarded his questioner in surprise.

The fellow was a husky-looking chap, apparently of the tramp order, and he carried a well-worn broom in his hands.

He was accompanied by a companion, several degrees shabbier and more disreputable than himself.

"Ye's ain't got no right here, so git!" continued the tough individual, in a threatening tone.

"What's the matter with you?" replied Haverstraw coolly, not in the least intimidated by the other's aggressive attitude.

"I'll show you what's the matter with me," snorted the ruffian angrily, "if you don't slide out, d'ye hear?"

"I don't understand what you are driving at," replied the boy, leaning on his shovel, and at the same time keeping a wary eye on the two men.

"Oh, you don't, don't you? I told you to move on, didn't I?"

"I heard you say so, and I want you to explain why you did so."

"I don't know as it's necessary to explain nothin' if we don't feel like it, my hearty. However, I don't mind tellin' yer we've got the contract for cleanin' the snow from this here sidewalk, see?"

"I guess you're mistaken," replied the boy.

"No; I ain't mistaken. Don't you s'pose I know what I'm talkin' about? We cleaned this place yesterday mornin' and we're goin' to do it ag'in, ain't we, Huskey?"

"I reckon we are, Snorker," acquiesced his companion, flapping his arms in front of his breast, in an effort to warm himself, for the day, though near the end of March, was bitterly cold.

"Well, it happens I was employed to do this job, and I'm going to do it," answered the boy, sturdily.

"Oh, yer goin' to do it, are yer?" said the fellow, with an ugly scowl. "Did yer hear what he said, Huskey?"

"I hain't deaf, Snorker. I heard him plain enough."

"Are we goin' to let him do it?"

"I don't reckon we are."

The boy half-turned away and lifted a shovelful of snow with the ease of one whose muscles were in excellent shape.



"Are you goin' to get out of here, you measly young cub?" demanded Snorker, advancing a foot nearer.

The boy made no answer to this request, but discharged the snow, with a sweep of the shovel, into the street, and took up another shovelful.

The fellow, finding abuse ineffectual, became aggressive.

"I'll fix you!" he snarled, raising his broom in a threatening way.

This was too much for Haverstraw.

He launched the contents of his wooden shovel full in the man's face.

Snorker fell back sputtering and swearing.

He hadn't been prepared for such an offensive move on the boy's part, and he was thoroughly surprised.

The fellow, called Huskey, half-started forward, as if about to take a hand in the proceedings.

The boy turned quickly upon him with a look which plainly said that he was prepared to defend himself, and the fellow stopped where he was.

Snorker, however, was furious, and as soon as he wiped the moist snow from his eyes, he picked up his broom and made a rush for Haverstraw.

"I'll smash yer inter the middle of next week, yer little villain!" he yelled, bringing the broom down on the boy's head.

At least that was his intention, but Jasper ducked nimbly to one side, seized the descending weapon and wrenched it from the man's hands.

"Now, get out of here, both of you; do you understand?" he cried, in tones that showed he meant to be obeyed. "I won't stand any more of your abuse. You've no right to interfere with me. I've been hired to clean this walk and stoop, and I'm going to do it. Go somewhere else, if you want to get busy. There's lots of snow around here that's waiting to be removed. I don't know why this house interests you particularly."

For a moment it looked as if Snorker intended to resume hostilities.

He doubled up his fists and glared vindictively at the plucky boy.

Then he thought better of it.

"All right, my hearty," he gritted through his teeth. "You've got the best of us jest now, but mebber we'll get a chance at yer some day. Come on, Huskey."

He picked up the broom Jasper had thrown down at his feet, and the two rascals tramped off together, making no effort to secure work at any of the other houses in the block.

Another lad of about Haverstraw's age and build was engaged in a similar employment in front of the next house.

He had paused in his work to watch the run-in Jasper had with the two tramps, and he meant to have taken a hand in the racket if Huskey had offered to help out his companion.

Now that the trouble was over, he came forward a few steps and spoke to Jasper.

"You did that fellow up in good shape," he said, with a grin.

"Don't you think he deserved all that he got?" asked Haverstraw, eyeing the other critically, and noting that he seemed to be suffering from the same kind of hard luck as himself.

"I do, and more, too. Those chaps had an awful nerve to tackle you in that way. If they wanted work there's loads of it around here."

"They don't seem to want it bad enough to ask for it elsewhere," as Snorker and his companion disappeared around the corner of the street.

"That's right. It's funny they wanted your job. Ever see them before?"

"Never."

"One would think they had a personal grudge against you."

"That can hardly be."

"If that other chap had taken a hand in the scrap I should have batted him over the head with my shovel. I meant to see that you had fair play."

"Thanks. I appreciate your kindness," replied Jasper, gratefully.

"Oh, that's all right," answered the other boy, in a friendly way. "By the way, you seem to be like me, in hard luck. A fellow doesn't hire out to shovel snow unless he needs the price badly."

"You've hit it. I need the money."

"What's your name?"

"Jasper Haverstraw," replied the lad, who had rather taken a liking for the other, who seemed to be an honest, manly kind of chap. "And yours?"

"Oh, my name is Dan—Dan Tucker."

"I'm glad to now you, Tucker," said Jasper, holding out his hand.

"Same here," grasping his hand and giving it a hearty shake. "Where do you hang out?"

Jasper's brow clouded.

"I live in Jessup Street, with some distant relatives."

"Well, if you don't object, I'd like to know you better, Haverstraw. I'm living at the Anchor Inn, down on the lake front. You'll come and see me, won't you?"

"I will. What do you usually do for a living?"

"Most anything that's honest. Last summer I was a deckhand on the Tecumseh, of the Erie Navigation Co., running between Buffalo and Toledo, and during the fall I shipped aboard the schooner Sally Ann, which carried coal between this place and Port Edward, across the lake."

"How much does such a job pay?" asked Jasper, with some interest.

"Seventy-five cents a day."

"You're out of work now, aren't you?"

"Yes. The Sally Ann stopped running about the first of the year, and I haven't been doing much of anything since then."

"Well, I guess we better get busy, or these stoops won't be cleared before dark," said Haverstraw, resuming his shoveling.



The boys didn't speak again until they had finished their work in a thoroughly efficient shape.

"That's half a dollar well earned," said Dan Tucker, regarding the appearance of the front of the house with satisfaction.

"That's what it is," agreed Jasper. "It'll be dark before long. We better collect our money now, and then I'll walk part of the way to the lake with you."

Haverstraw went to the area gate and rang the bell.

A servant admitted him and showed him where to put the shovel and the old broom he had used.

Then she asked him to enter the kitchen.

The lady of the house was there, with a very pretty young miss of fifteen, who called her aunt.

Jasper removed his cap politely.

"You have made a very neat job of it," said the lady, with a smile, "and I think you deserve an extra quarter."

She handed him seventy-five cents.

"I am very much obliged to you, ma'am," replied Haverstraw, accepting the coins.

"Perhaps you'd like to have something to eat," said the lady, pleased with his gentlemanly ways. "Jane will make you a cup of coffee, and give you some cold meat and bread."

"Thank you, ma'am; but I don't wish to put you to any trouble. You have already paid me well for the work."

"Isn't he a nice young man?" whispered the girl.

It was a rather loud stage whisper, and Jasper heard it and glanced at the golden-haired girl with a look of evident admiration.

She detected the look and smiled at him.

"You don't seem used to doing common labor of this kind, though you look strong and healthy," said the lady of the house, in a tone of some interest. "Your speech and manners are much above your apparent calling. You seem to have been well educated."

"I was graduated at a Philadelphia public school, ma'am, and afterward went to an academy for a year and a half. Then my father died, leaving his affairs so involved that I had to give up school and strike out in the world for myself. My mother died many years ago."

The lady and her niece expressed their sympathy.

"I came to Erie," Jasper continued, "at the invitation of a distant relative of my mother's."

"Indeed," said the lady, in some surprise, noting again the boy's somewhat shabby clothes. "How long have you been living with them?"

"About six weeks, ma'am."

"You have not been fortunate in securing employment, I should judge. Couldn't your relative get you something to do?"

"He is not steadily employed himself. He is a dock laborer."

"I should think you would be fitted to fill a clerkship. If you will give me your name and address I will speak to my husband, who is a vessel agent, and has a large acquaintance among the business men downtown, about get-

ting you something to do. Mabel, run and get a pencil and a piece of paper."

"Thank you, ma'am; you are very kind to interest yourself in me."

"Don't mention it. Sit up to the table now."

"Jasper Haverstraw," read Miss Mabel, from the slip of paper the boy handed her with the pencil. "That isn't a common name, is it auntie?" she whispered, as they turned to leave the room. "Where is Jessup Street?"

"Down near the water front."

"It isn't a nice neighborhood, is it?"

"No, my dear. Very poor people live there."

They walked into the dining-room, leaving Jasper to his meal.

He hurried through with it, feeling sure Dan Tucker was waiting outside for him to appear.

"Good-by," said the golden-haired miss as Jasper passed the open dining-room door on his way out.

"Good-by, Miss——"

"My name is Mabel Channing," she said, with a smile.

"I hope I shall see you again some time."

"Thank you, Miss Channing"; and then he passed out at the area door.

"What a nice, gentlemanly boy!" she mused, as she watched him leave the house.

## CHAPTER II.

### OUT ON THE STREETS.

Jasper Haverstraw walked as far as Jessup Street with his new-found friend, Dan Tucker, and there took leave of him, promising to call upon him at the Anchor Inn on the following day.

Then he walked down the narrow, snow-blocked street toward the tenement where he had been living ever since he came to Erie six weeks before.

It was a disreputable neighborhood.

The male inhabitants were mostly coal shovelers and dock laborers of every type, who lived with their large families in all degrees of poverty.

Jim Craddock, a ne'er-do-well cousin of Jasper's mother, had enticed the boy from Philadelphia for the purpose of making him help support the family, as Craddock hated to work any more than he could help.

He much preferred to hang around the docks in the sun and chin to a select crowd of cronies similarly disposed to shirk the necessity of earning an honest living.

Jasper was much surprised on his arrival in Erie to find the Craddocks living in such miserable quarters.

Mr. Craddock had a tale of hard luck ready to win his sympathy.

Mrs. Craddock, who was in the plot to make the boy useful to them, tearfully described how they had always been used to better quarters, but her husband's long illness—a pleasant bit of fiction, by the way—and various other un-



fortunate matters, had lately compelled them to economize.

As Jasper listened to her tale he wondered why they had sent for him, for until he secured work he would, of necessity, prove a drawback to their already limited resources.

Their mode of living was thoroughly distasteful for him, but he didn't feel as if he could break away from them abruptly.

Besides he felt, away out there, like a cat in a strange garret.

And to add to his helplessness he had landed in Erie without funds.

Mr. Craddock suggested, as delicately as he could, that Jasper hustle around for a job, and to this the boy immediately agreed, much to his relative's satisfaction, who foresaw a life of comparative idleness for himself in the perspective.

But a job such as Jasper believed himself fitted for was not easily found in Erie, and as the days passed and nothing in that line materialized, Mr. Craddock, who had been obliged to exert himself more than usual to keep the pot boiling, began to express his dissatisfaction.

Then Jasper, who felt he was idle through no fault of his own, suggested that he withdraw himself from the Craddock family circle in order to save them the expense of supporting him.

He had no idea where he should go, and the necessity of begging a temporary subsistence at the hand of charity was particularly disheartening, but still he did not feel as if he could remain where he was, under the circumstances.

Mr. Craddock, taking alarm at this resolution on the boy's part, went into his little den of a room that night, after he was asleep, and took possession of the two suits of good clothes Jasper owned, substituting a single shabby suit which he had obtained, with some cash to boot, from a slop shop in the neighborhood.

Naturally, Jasper put up a kick next morning, but Mrs. Craddock insisted that the premises had been robbed during the night, and, to carry the story out, bewailed the loss of sundry finery of her own and her husband's.

Jasper, feeling that his personal appearance no longer warranted his looking for a suitable position, was now willing to take anything that came his way, resolving to break away from the Craddocks at the first chance.

From this time his relatives became more insistent that he get work, and more abusive when he failed to find it, though he tried hard enough to get it.

Though naturally plucky and self-reliant, Jasper felt much disheartened under the circumstances which surrounded him, but he hoped, as soon as the milder days of spring came on, that something would turn up.

On the day we introduce him to our readers the recent heavy snow storm suggested a way of picking up a dollar perhaps in removing the snow, as he had often seen poor men do, and he started out with that end in sight.

He found some difficulty in getting such a job at first, as he was ashamed to present himself at the best houses

in his shabby apparel, and when he finally mustered up the courage to do so, he was turned down so often and with such scant ceremony that it took some of the starch out of him.

Finally he cleaned one place for thirty cents, another for twenty, and then secured the job where he was attacked by the two tramps.

As we have said, Jasper walked slowly down Jessup Street through the accumulated snow which was never removed until the sun got busy with the work.

He paused before the door of one of the miserable houses, which had not been painted in the recollection of the oldest inhabitant of the neighborhood; but then its neighbors had not fared any better in that respect.

He turned the knob of the street door and admitted himself into a small, dingy-looking hall, where a disreputable staircase pointed the way to another tenement above.

The Craddock apartments were on the ground floor, and consisted of two fairly large rooms—the front one overlooking the street being utilized as a bedroom for Mr. and Mrs. Craddock, the second as a sitting-room, dining-room and kitchen combined—and a small room, not much bigger than a large-sized closet, in the rear, in which Jasper had the honor of sleeping in company with a yellow mongrel pup who, when awake, bossed the house and the neighborhood as well.

The smoky hall lamp had not yet been lighted, and the hall was as dark at that hour as it well could be.

But that fact didn't bother Jasper, who knew his way by intuition, and he presently reached a door knob of the living-room and entered.

Some of the dampness of the snowstorm had penetrated the room, for the walls were discolored to an extent that left the original tint doubtful.

One window, overlooking a dirty yard, admitted light and air.

In this comfortless apartment, which was destitute of everything but the commonest and most necessary articles of furniture, a man and a woman, both of middle age, were sitting on either side of a table, on which stood part of a loaf of bread, some streaky-looking butter on a plate, a small piece of fried ham on another plate, and three cracked cups and saucers.

The teapot stood on the stove, in which a brisk coal fire was glowing, while the kettle had found a temporary resting place in the small sink.

Mr. and Mrs. Craddock were just finishing their meagre supper.

Evidently they hadn't considered it at all necessary to wait for Jasper.

Mr. Craddock, a heavy, beetle-browed man, with large projecting ears, had just lighted a short, black pipe; and Mrs. Craddock, who had lost all traces of her early good looks, if she had ever possessed any, was lingering over her third cup of tea.

Both regarded Jasper with an unpleasant stare.

"Well," said Mrs. Craddock, after drinking the remain-



der of her tea, "it is the old story, I s'pose. You have brought nothing home, and you want your tea?"

The boy, disgusted with the chilliness of his reception, remained silent.

"So, you're gettin' sulky!" growled Mr. Craddock, looking savagely at him.

The head of the house had evidently been drinking more than was good for him, for he was in an unusually ugly humor.

"How do you s'pose we're goin' to keep you, if you never bring any money home?" snorted the amiable Mrs. Craddock, discontentedly.

"Yes; that's it, you lazy jackanapes!" roared the lady's husband, pounding the table with some violence. "Are we always to grub you, and lodge you, and clothe you, and get nothin' for it?"

Jasper was astonished at the unpleasantness of his reception.

Clearly, they were dropping the mask at last, and were now expressing their true sentiments in a flat-footed manner.

After the first feeling of surprise, the boy experienced a glow of indignation.

"Why did you induce me to come to Erie?" he asked, with a rising color.

"None of your sarse!" thundered Mr. Craddock.

"We sent for you 'cause we thought you was an industrious boy," said the lady, taking on herself to reply to the question.

"That's right," snorted her husband, trying to fix Jasper with his watery eye, but making a dismal failure of it. "We thought you was a worker, and we could depend on you. We find you're a lazy, good-for-nothin' loafer, d'ye hear? You make us sick with your dudish airs, and your eddication, and your what not. You ain't no good, and the sooner you git out the better."

"Very well," answered the boy, quietly.

"What d'ye mean by that?" snarled Mr. Craddock, offensively.

"I mean I will relieve you of my presence," said Jasper, sturdily. "I have no desire to stay where I'm not wanted."

"You will relieve us of your presence," repeated the man, jeeringly. "Did you hear that, old woman? He will relieve us of his presence. There's dictionary talk for you! He can work his mouth to the queen's taste, but as for doin' any other kind of work—bah!"

"I see now that you don't want me around," said Jasper, calmly.

"We don't; that's a fact. We're disappointed in you."

"All right. I'll leave in the morning."

"No, you won't," snarled the man. "You'll leave now, d'ye hear?"

"But I don't know where to go at this hour," protested Jasper.

"Go to blazes!" roared Mr. Craddock, bringing his fist down on the table again.

That was enough for the boy.

He instantly turned on his heel and left the room and the house.

In a moment he was a solitary unit among the 40,000 odd people of the city of Erie—homeless, friendless and practically penniless.

### CHAPTER III.

#### JASPER FALLS INTO STRANGE QUARTERS.

Sadly, wearily, and without aim or purpose, Jasper Haverstraw turned his back upon the miserable quarters that for six weeks he had called home, and walked up the street in the snow and gloom of the early evening.

It seemed to him that it had grown colder since he entered the tenement fifteen minutes before.

"Thank goodness!" he breathed. "I have the price of a lodging to-night. It would be awful to have to tramp about the streets in this weather looking for shelter. But where shall I go?"

He stepped into a doorway near the corner to consider.

Then he recollected Dan Tucker and the Anchor Inn.

"It's somewhere along the lake front," he mused. "Dan said any one could tell me where it stood. Well, I'll inquire my way there now. If Dan can afford to stay there I guess it isn't too rich for my finances. It's mighty lucky I managed to pick up that \$1.25 this afternoon—the first money I've earned since I came to Erie."

So Jasper started off at a brisk pace for the water front.

The lake was not so very far from Jessup Street, but every step the boy took it seemed to grow colder.

The wind, blowing in from the big stretch of water, which laved the frozen shore of Canada on the north, went through his not over-warm jacket like a knife.

Dim lights gleamed through the frost-bound windows of the many small stores in that neighborhood.

He met quite a number of people on the frozen streets, but one and all seemed to be hurrying to places of shelter.

After persistent inquiry he found himself at last in front of a dilapidated saloon which bore a weirdly-painted sign on its big window—"Anchor Inn."

It was one of the oldest houses in Erie, and was so loose in its joints that it made a crutch of its nearest neighbor.

"Looks as if a good wind would bring it to the ground like a house built of cards," commented Jasper.

Then he opened the main door and entered the barroom.

The place was pleasantly warm to the chilled boy, for a big stove glowed in the center of the low-ceiled room.

The largest part of one side was devoted to a long bar, behind which a smooth-faced man was busily engaged mixing hot drinks for a fair-sized crowd.

The smoke from a score of clay pipes was rising to the ceiling, where it lay in palpitating folds, like a dim fog.

Watching his chance, Jasper asked the barkeeper where he would be likely to find Dan Tucker.

"He went in to supper a minute ago. Go through yon-



der door," he said, jerking his thumb over his right shoulder.

Haverstraw followed directions and found himself in another low room, in the center of which was a long table, flanked by a number of chairs.

Several of these were occupied by roughly-dressed men eating.

A young woman with straw-colored hair was taking dishes to and from the room.

Jasper's entrance attracted no attention.

He paused close to the door and looked around for the face of his friend.

Dan was seated by himself at the far end of the table.

As soon as Jasper spied him he walked over and sat down beside him.

"Why, hello; that you, Haverstraw?" exclaimed Dan, much surprised. "I didn't expect to see you so soon. What's up?"

"The unexpected. I'm out on the world," with a faint smile.

"Out on the world? What do you mean?"

"My relatives have given me the bounce out."

"You don't say," whistled Dan, in some astonishment. "What for?"

"They said they were tired of supporting me in luxurious idleness."

"Luxurious idleness is good," laughed Tucker. "You'll room with me now, won't you?"

"I don't know," replied Jasper, with some hesitation. "I've only got \$1.25."

"Don't let that worry you. Turn around here and have supper."

"I had something to eat, you know, at that house on Blank Avenue."

"Have some more. You only had a bite there."

A plate of beef stew which the girl brought to Dan at that moment looked and smelled so good that Jasper was easily persuaded to order a plate of the stew for himself.

After the meal Dan arranged with the proprietor of the "Anchor Inn" for Jasper to occupy the same room with him and take his meals at the house till further notice.

Then they went into the barroom, where it was warm, took seats in a corner away from the miscellaneous crowd of drinkers and smokers, and entered into a discussion about the future.

"I s'pose you haven't any prospects?" asked Dan.

Haverstraw shook his head.

"When the weather breaks up, there'll be a chance on the lake, if you'd care to go into that kind of work. It's rough, and hard in spells, but it'll pan you over till something else turns up," said Dan.

"Come to think of it," said Jasper, recollecting. "The lady of the house I cleaned the snow from the front of this afternoon said she'd speak to her husband about me. I gave her my name and my Jessup Street address. If a message should be sent there for me the chances are I'd never hear about it now."

"Then you'd better go up there to-morrow and tell her you've moved to the Anchor."

"I guess I will," answered Jasper, who thought he might catch another glimpse of pretty Miss Channing, who interested him greatly, though he could hardly hope ever to be classed as one of her friends. "Even the ghost of a chance for something to do is better than one at all."

"That's right. Never let anything get by you, that's my motto."

"And mine, too."

Just then the landlord of the establishment came up to them and called Dan aside.

"I've got to carry a message for Mr. Baxter," explained Dan to Jasper a moment later, as he put on his cap and buttoned his thick jacket close up about his throat. "You wait here in the corner till I get back. I shan't be gone more'n half an hour."

Jasper nodded, picked up a newspaper and began to read.

The warmth of the room, the hum of conversation going on all around, and the added fact that he had not slept well the preceding night, had their effect on the boy.

His eyelids began to droop and the printed words before his eyes began to run together into an indistinguishable blur.

He recognized the fact that he was falling asleep, got up and decided to take a short walk in the open air.

The chill air without soon dispelled the sleep-benumbing influences that had attacked him in the warm barroom of the "Anchor Inn."

He walked about a block up a side street and then started back again.

The cold wind from the lake induced him to hug pretty close to the sides of the buildings.

Suddenly he stepped on a loose plank, fell against a door on his right, which gave away to his weight, and he was precipitated into a dark and noisome-smelling hallway as dark as pitch.

His head came into contact with the baluster of a staircase and he saw a good many stars.

It was several moments before he picked himself up, and then he felt kind of dizzy and uncomfortable.

He sat down on the lowest stair to recover himself.

The street door had swung to again.

He might have been there five minutes before he felt ready to make a move.

Just as he was about to rise, a door on his left was suddenly opened and a dim light shone into the hallway.

Two rough-looking men came out and the door closed behind them.

They walked a step or two toward the street door and then came to a stop in the dark.

"It's a mighty cold night, Huskey," remarked a familiar voice, "but I guess it'll make folks sleep all the tighter."

"I reckon it will, Snorker," replied the other man.

Then there was a pause, in the midst of which Jasper heard the striking of a match.



A bright glow sprang up in the passage as the man Snorker proceeded to light his pipe.

The boy caught a side view of their faces.

He hardly required that to identify them as the two tramps he had the run-in with that afternoon on Blank Avenue.

It was fortunate their backs were turned to him, for the flame of the match had also brought his own figure and the lower part of the staircase out into dim relief, and they must have noticed him, had they been looking in his direction.

The match went out and all was dark again.

Jasper held his breath for fear his presence might become known to them, for he knew these men had no pleasant recollections of him.

He realized that he was at a decided disadvantage, and that if they caught him there it might go hard with him at their hands.

So he waited impatiently for them to leave the house.

## CHAPTER IV.

### IN THE HANDS OF THE ENEMY.

Presently Snorker spoke again.

"If it hadn't been for that pesky young monkey who got ahead of us this afternoon we should have got a chance to see the lay of the basement after we'd cleaned up the snow. Now we've got to trust to luck."

Jasper easily heard every word, and wondered what the rascal was driving at.

"Oh, we kin get in all right," replied Huskey. "Don't you worry about that. I piped the place off through a hole in the fence from the vacant lot in the rear. There's a glass door, and an outside wooden one, which is bolted at night. There are two bolts, one at the top and the other at the bottom. We can easily force 'em, Snorker. It's so easy I could laugh."

"Well, you've got a jimmy, Huskey; so I'll look to you to do the business."

"I'll do it all right, you kin bet yer boots."

"As Woodman is away in Buffalo there ain't none but the women folks—four of 'em—in the house. We ought to be able to clean the place out. On sich a night as this we needn't fear that the cop on the beat is goin' to give us any trouble. He'll be snuggled up somewheres that's warm."

"That's what he will, all right," acquiesced Huskey, slapping his hands against his thighs.

"Well, we'll go down the street and put a couple of warm drinks into us, and then we'll make a start for that there crib."

"I'm with you, Snorker," and the boy heard him smack his lips loudly at the alluring prospect of a couple of hot whiskies.

Snorker then pulled the door open and stepped outside, only to go down on his face.

He had stepped on the same loose board which had tripped Jasper up, only it worked the opposite way with him.

The ruffian got up, swearing loudly over his mishap.

Huskey, however, thought the matter a huge joke and made fun of his companion, which circumstance didn't increase Snorker's good humor.

The door banged to after them, to Jasper's great relief.

The knowledge that the two rascals were going to burglarize the Woodman house on Blank Avenue that night remained with him and engaged his thoughts.

It was certainly his duty to prevent the crime.

"I'll go up there at once, put Mrs. Woodman on her guard, and then notify the police. The rascals will probably be caught. That ought to make me solid enough to catch a job through Mr. Woodman."

The prospect was so inviting that the boy, after peering out of the door to see if the enemy had disappeared, and finding that they had, started off up the street, quite unmindful of the bitter weather.

He believed he would have no difficulty in finding Blank Avenue and spotting the house, the front of which he had cleaned of the snow that afternoon.

He tied his handkerchief about his ears, and pulled his cap well down.

Then with his hands in his pockets and his back to the wind, he tramped sturdily forward through the snow.

After walking some distance in what he believed to be the right direction, he stopped at a corner drug store, saw it was after eleven o'clock, and asked his way to Blank Avenue.

"Keep straight on for five blocks and you will run into it," replied the clerk.

After walking two blocks the boy noticed a red stone building he had taken note of on his way back to Jessup Street with Dan.

"I know pretty near where I am now," he thought, and pushed ahead with added vigor. "I'll be there now inside of ten minutes."

After counting five blocks he stopped at the next corner.

"This must be Blank Avenue. Too bad there isn't a sign on the lamp-post. These side streets look as much alike as peas in a pod to a stranger like me."

There wasn't a soul on the street he could inquire of to make sure, so he had to trust to luck and the accuracy of the druggist's directions.

He turned and walked down the street for a couple of blocks, examining the houses on the north side of the way carefully as he proceeded, but the Woodman house wasn't among them.

He kept on for another block with no better result, and then began to feel a bit discouraged.

"This can't be the right street. I'll have to try the one beyond."

He struggled forward along the partly-cleaned walk till he reached the next corner.

There was a lamp-post there, but no sign on it.

"It's a wonder they wouldn't have the name on the lamps



as I've seen elsewhere. It would come in mighty handy, especially on a night like this."

Jasper retraced his course to the west along this street for four blocks, but was soon satisfied that he was not on Blank Avenue.

"This isn't so easy as I thought it was going to be," he muttered. "I must be a couple of streets out of the way. I'll go back a bit."

While crossing the next street he saw two men coming toward him in the near distance.

"I'll ask these persons where Blank Avenue is. They ought to be able to direct me, for I'm sure it is somewhere right about this neighborhood."

So he waited near the corner house for them to come up.

Their hats were drawn low over their eyes, their coat collars turned up and their heads down, with their hands in their pockets.

"I say," said Jasper, accosting them, "can you tell me where——"

The two men stopped and raised their heads.

Jasper almost dropped.

He recognized the pedestrians as Snorker and Huskey.

They knew the boy at once, and Snorker uttered an oath.

Then he grabbed the half-frozen lad, forced him against the house, and held him there.

"Get yer handkerchief out and tie his hands, Huskey."

As Jasper had a strong objection to being tied, he put up a big struggle, but Snorker had him at a disadvantage and he was obliged to submit to the inevitable.

"I reckon we've got yer where the hair is short, young feller," said Snorker, triumphantly. "We didn't expect to meet yer so soon ag'in, but seein' as we have we'll jest do you up a bit to square scores. Yer was as sassy and independent as a hog on ice this afternoon when yer refused to move on after we asked yer to. I'll bet yer never expected to see us no more. Yer see, yer was mistaken. Fetch him along, Huskey. We'll stuff him under the sidewalk of the vacant lot at the back of the crib. It'll take a good-sized fire to thaw him out in the mornin' when he's found."

It was only a few steps around the corner to the lot in question.

They yanked Jasper with them as if he were a bag of meal, toppled him over into a pile of snow which almost smothered him, and then hauled him under the sidewalk.

They tied him to one of the supports away back in a corner.

"I don't reckon you'll quite freeze to death in here," jeered Snorker, "but you'll wish yer was up ag'in a good fire long afore mornin'. Next time a couple of gents like us orders you to do somthin' yer'll do it, I guess."

Then they left him, after Huskey had produced a small flat bottle from his pocket, and they had mockingly drunk his health.

Jasper saw them start across the lot, and he immediately

realized that he was directly in the rear of the Woodman house.

"I missed Blank Avenue by walking one block too far to the north. Only for that unfortunate blunder I should have been able to block their game. Now, what am I to do? They seem to have me dead to rights. If they really mean to leave me here all night I'll freeze to death."

Jasper made an immediate effort to try and free himself, but he found they had tied him as tight as it was possible for them to do.

"This is an exasperating situation to be in, after all my good intentions to outflank those scoundrels," he breathed. "My fingers are feeling numb already."

He pulled and tugged on the handkerchief for several minutes, apparently to no good purpose.

In his struggle he stepped on a piece of ice, lost his foothold and for a moment hung by his wrists alone.

He thought his wrists were broken, so terrible was the pain.

Then, of a sudden, the handkerchief slipped down with his weight until it caught in a wide indentation in the post and his knees touched the hard snow.

Now he noticed that the handkerchief was quite loose.

This fact gave him new hope, and when the pain in his wrists had subsided somewhat he found he could easily withdraw his hands from his bonds.

He stood up—free at last.

## CHAPTER V.

### A TICKLISH PIECE OF BUSINESS.

"I wonder if they have got into the house by this time?" he asked himself, as he came out from under the sidewalk, and looked across the vacant lot toward the three-story brick dwelling which he judged to be the Woodman home.

"I'll just take a look through the fence and see what I can see."

He crossed the lot, discovered a convenient knot-hole and looked through into the neatly-kept yard beyond.

"They've effected an entrance, all right," he said, noticing that the wooden storm door of the basement was wide open, though the glass door was closed.

Then he began to consider what he should do.

He might go around to the front of the house, ring the bell violently and continuously, and by this means frighten the rascals off and save the house from being robbed.

The rough treatment he had suffered at their hands, however, made him very desirous of having the scoundrels captured and put in jail.

How could he, single-handed, expect to bring about such a satisfactory result?

"I wonder if they're armed?" he thought. "I've a great mind to enter the house the same way they have done. It looks as if they had left the way clear for a rapid retreat."



He decided to do this.

It was a simple matter to climb over the fence.

Then he waded through the snow, which plainly showed the tracks of the two men, up to the basement glass door.

Trying the knob, Jasper found, as he expected, that the door was unlocked.

So he passed into the hallway of the basement, and the warmth of the place was particularly grateful to his half-benumbed limbs.

The kitchen door was open and he glanced in.

The room was just as the cook had left it when she went to bed at the top of the house.

Jasper listened intently for some sound to guide him as to the whereabouts of the would-be burglars.

He rightly judged that it wouldn't be healthy for him to run foul of them.

The dining-room door was shut, and he put his ear to the keyhole.

Not a sound.

"They must be upstairs," he breathed.

Softly he mounted the basement stairs, the carpet deadening his footsteps.

The main hall was dimly illuminated by a light which filtered through a pink globe perched on an ornamental brass pipe running up through the baluster.

The doors of what Jasper guessed to be the back and front parlors were both closed.

He listened at the keyhole of each, but couldn't make out that any one was inside.

He debated with himself whether he should look inside or not.

While he stood there undecided, he heard something fall, and the sound was followed by a smothered malediction.

"They're in there," he said, with a quickening of the blood in his veins. "I'll go upstairs and wake Mrs. Woodman up. I'm afraid it'll be a ticklish job, for the sight of me is bound to alarm her, and if she should make any noise the fat will be in the fire. I wonder if there is a revolver in the house? I hope there is, for with it I might be able to corner those rascals somehow."

Not a little nervous over the outcome of his plan to arouse the lady of the house at that hour of the night, or morning, for he knew it was some time after midnight, Jasper mounted the heavily-carpeted stairs to the hallway above.

"Now, which is Mrs. Woodman's room? It must be the front one," he concluded.

With his hand on the balustrade he was in the act of turning in that direction when suddenly, and without the least warning, the door facing the head of the stairs, and consequently within a few feet of where he stood, was opened and a female, attired in a Japanese kimono, with a night lamp in her hand, appeared in the opening.

Jasper was struck motionless with surprise, not to say consternation.

But for all that he recognized the person as Mabel Channing.

She saw him standing there in the gloom, and she paused, held to the spot with sudden terror, which blanched her pretty face to the color of ivory.

The unexpected had happened, and as the boy recovered his self-possession, he expected every second that the girl would utter a scream which could not fail of alarming the burglars in the parlors.

It was up to him to prevent this, and a dozen methods flew through his brain in half that many seconds, so quick do the mental faculties respond when a sudden emergency spurs them to action.

Almost unconsciously he uttered the single word "Mabel."

The sound of her name seemed to partially reassure the girl, for a flash of color came into her face, she raised the lamp above her head, and peered sharply at the indistinct figure standing within a yard of her.

The light fell full on the boy's face.

"Jasper Haverstraw!" she gasped, the color retreating again from her face, and her hand going up to her bosom.

"Hush!" he whispered, not daring to stir, lest such a movement might precipitate a scene. "Yes, I am Jasper Haverstraw, Miss Channing. Don't be frightened. I am here to save the house from being robbed."

"What do you mean?" she murmured. "Are you alone?"

"Yes. You won't scream if I tell you something. If you do it will ruin everything."

She did not reply, only looked at him with a strange, startled expression on her face.

"May I come closer to you?" he asked, desperately. "You can trust me."

She opened her mouth to answer, but the sound died on her lips.

"Please go back to your room and I will come as far as the door."

She seemed to understand him, hesitated a moment, and then slowly backed into the room, still holding the lamp on high.

He followed her to the door, partially closed it, so that little more than his head was in the room, then he spoke.

"Miss Channing, I want you to help me," he said, speaking rapidly, but low and distinctly. "I want you to wake your aunt up without the least noise, if that be possible."

"Why?" she asked, lowering the lamp.

She had recovered a good bit of her self-possession, and being naturally courageous, was now curious to know what this singular intrusion meant.

How came this boy, who had occupied a considerable share of her thoughts since she had met him for the first time that afternoon, to be in the house at that hour?

What was his purpose?

Could it be possible she had been deceived by his honest, manly face?

Was he a thief?

It was with deep anxiety she awaited his reply.

"Because there are two burglars in the parlors below. I discovered their purpose of entering this place, and I came here to warn you all, but arrived too late to head the



rascals off. I managed to follow them in, they entered by the rear basement door, and I am here to protect you all with my life, if need be."

"And this is the truth, Jasper Haverstraw?" she asked, solemnly.

"It is, as Heaven is my judge, Miss Channing," he said, earnestly.

"I believe you," she said, coming directly up to him.

"And you are willing to trust me?" he breathed, eagerly.

"I am," she said, simply.

"Thank you," he replied, gratefully. "Now, do you know if your aunt has a revolver in her room?"

"Yes. Uncle John always keeps one under his pillow at night."

"You must get it for me. See that your aunt makes no noise."

"I will get it. You say there are two thieves in the parlors at this moment?" she added, with wonderful calmness.

"Yes."

"There is a telephone in aunt's room. I will call up police headquarters, and have officers sent here at once."

"Do so, Miss Channing. Then hand me out the revolver and I will try and hold up the scoundrels until the police arrive."

"Will you dare do that?" she asked, flashing a look of admiration at him.

"I will. I dare do anything where you are concerned," he said, boldly.

## CHAPTER VI.

### CAUGHT.

Mabel Channing, now that she thoroughly comprehended the situation, was prepared to second Jasper's efforts to the letter.

She hastened to arouse her aunt, and accomplished the matter so tactfully that Haverstraw himself, though only a few yards away, was hardly aware she had succeeded before she glided up to his side and placed the loaded revolver in his hand.

"I am going to ring up the police," she whispered. "Now, do please be careful of yourself how you act against those men," she added, earnestly. "They are probably armed, and may shoot you down if they can catch you a moment off your guard. I am sure we would sooner lose some of our property than that you, who have so bravely come to our assistance, should be hurt."

"I can take care of myself, Miss Channing," replied Jasper, in a resolute tone. "I look to you to do your share, so far as notifying the officers of the law is concerned, and I will try and give a good account of these rascals below. Now that I have a weapon with which to defend myself, I am not in the least afraid of them."

He remembered how easily he had handled the two of them on the sidewalk in front of the house by putting up

a bold front, and he did not doubt he would be able to intimidate them with his pistol.

"That fellow, Huskey, is a rank coward," he muttered, as he took his way softly downstairs. "As for the other, he isn't so much when he has to toe the scratch."

Thus far, no sign had been given that the rascals had any idea that their movements had attracted attention from the occupants of the house.

Jasper supposed they were still busily engaged in denuding the parlor of such portable valuables as they expected to carry away with them.

Whether, after they had gathered the stuff together, they meant to pay a visit to the upper floor, was a problem the boy did not bother with.

He meant to take them by surprise in the midst of their operations, intimidate them by getting the drop on them, and then hold his advantage till the police relieved him of his delicate job.

As soon as he reached the front parlor door he applied his ear to the keyhole, for the purpose of locating their position, if possible, as he knew he might upset the best-laid plan by being too precipitate.

He listened intently for several moments, but the silence of the grave reigned in the room.

What bothered him the most was that not a ray of light came through the keyhole, or from the crack under the door.

This seemed to show that if they were still in the rooms they were conducting their business by means of the usual bull's-eye lanterns.

Such being the case, if he opened the parlor door the light from the hall, dim though it was, would at once betray his appearance on the scene, and without knowing exactly where they were would place him at disadvantage.

This was a risk he could not afford to take, so he decided to mount guard outside till they appeared with their booty, and then hold them up.

First, however, he decided that it would be the act of a wise general to cut off a swift retreat on their part, in case by some flank movement they managed to outwit him at the critical moment.

With this idea in view, he stealthily made his way down to the basement and bolted both of the doors through which they, as well as himself, had entered the premises.

"Come to think of it," he said to himself, "down here will be the best place for me to tackle them. I can hide in the kitchen—hello!" he exclaimed, in surprise, for he now noticed that the kitchen door, which had been wide open when he passed that way first, was now closed.

The discovery rather staggered him for the moment, for it showed that the rascals must have gone there while he was talking to Miss Channing upstairs.

Perhaps they were in there or the dining-room at that moment after having finished with the parlors.

They might be rummaging the basement for the silverware, or such other ware as they discovered within reach.

Full of this idea, Jasper went to the dining-room door and listened.



"They're in there, all right," he said, noticing the subdued sound of desultory conversation, and perceiving the shaft of light which shone under the door.

Placing his hand about the knob he felt a key in the lock.

With the utmost caution he turned it by slow degrees, cutting off their exit in that direction.

"I have them now, I guess," he breathed, with a grin of satisfaction. "These rascals are easy."

He returned to the kitchen door, removed his shoes, opened the door softly and entered.

The door leading to the dining-room was ajar.

Creeping up to it he was astonished to see Snorker and Huskey seated at the table enjoying themselves to the queen's taste.

A plate of cold meat, one of crackers, and a whiskey bottle stood before them, to which they were helping themselves with great relish and satisfaction, apparently disturbed by no thought of danger.

On the floor beside each of them stood a large bundle, the appearance of which showed that it constituted their plunder from above.

"Well, upon my word, they've got a cool nerve after all," thought Jasper. "I never would have believed it of them. They must think they have a regular cinch here. They don't appear to think they're taking any chance at all. It's lucky for the house they're so confident. Otherwise it's clear they would have been gone by the time I got down here. They workd pretty swiftly upstairs, I must say."

Jasper, revolver in hand and ready for any emergency, silently watched them devour the meat and crackers and swallow several glasses of undiluted liquor.

Even then they did not appear to be in any hurry, but leisurely lit their pipes and began to smoke as if such a thing as interference on the part of the occupants of the house was not to be feared.

"I suppose they are banking on the supposition that women only are in the house. It would rather stagger them, I guess, if they discovered that I was quietly overlooking their social enjoyment with a loaded revolver in my hand."

Jasper snickered to himself as he thought of the surprise which awaited them as soon as they got ready to make a move.

"I wonder how long before the police will show up?" he thought. "I hope these chaps will continue to enjoy themselves for some little time yet. It will save me a lot of trouble."

At that moment Jasper felt a slight touch on his shoulder.

Although apprehending no danger from his rear, it came so unexpectedly that he could not help giving a start as he turned about to find Mabel Channing at his elbow.

He drew back from the door and whispered to her to look into the dining-room.

She did so, and was much astonished at what she saw there.

Then he drew her out into the basement hall.

"You have notified the police?" he asked her.

"Yes."

"And when do you think we may expect them?"

"In a very short time."

"Then I advise you to watch for their coming from the parlor windows, so as to admit them without noise."

"I mean to do so," she answered. "But some of the officers will approach from the back, so the man who talked to me over the wire intimated."

"They can't get in that way, as I have bolted both doors. I can't watch——"

A movement in the dining-room at this juncture cut him short.

The boy judged that Snorker and his companion were preparing to depart.

"I guess they're about to make a move," he said to Miss Channing. "Run upstairs at once and leave me to attend to them."

"You will be careful, won't you?" she begged, earnestly, catching him by the hand.

Jasper assured her that he would, thereupon she pressed his fingers gently and hurried away.

Haverstraw returned to the kitchen in time to see the two men pick up their bundles and, without bothering to turn out the gas, start for the door.

"Stop!" cried the boy, stepping from behind it and facing them with the revolver in position for instant use.

Snorker, who was in the lead, fell back as if he had been shot, such a startling effect did the unexpected challenge have upon him.

As for Huskey, his dirty, unshaven face turned livid with fear, and his knees shook under him.

"Drop those bags!" was Jasper's next command.

Huskey let his fall with a bang, and then crawled under the table, leaving his companion to fight it out.

Snorker had more nerve and held on to his bundle.

Then he recognized the boy, and a curse slipped from his lips.

His idea was that somebody had set the lad free, possibly a policeman, and he looked over Jasper's shoulder in the expectation of seeing this somebody.

"Your little game is up, Mr. Snorker," said Jasper, coolly. "Better yield quietly or you may get hurt."

Snorker's face grew as black as a thunder-cloud.

"I'll get square with you for this, young feller!" he grated, making a menacing move forward.

"Stop where you are or I'll shoot!" cried Jasper.

At that moment a couple of policemen entered the kitchen, followed by Mabel.

The boy stepped aside at their bidding, and within two minutes Snorker and his associate had handcuffs on their wrists.

## CHAPTER VII.

### JASPER HAS AN IDEA FOR MAKING MONEY.

"You are a brave boy, and I don't know how to thank you enough for what you have done for us," said Mrs.



Woodman to Jasper Haverstraw, as the boy stood, cap in hand, facing her and Mabel in the diningroom after Snorker and Huskey had been marched off to jail by the officers.

"You are quite welcome, ma'am," he answered, respectfully. "I don't think I did more than my duty in trying to save your property as soon as I found out what those fellows were up to."

"I am sure it isn't every boy that would have acted as you did," said the lady. "You faced a considerable risk in our behalf, and when my husband comes back from Buffalo I will see that you are suitably rewarded."

"I hope your husband won't think of paying me for this service, ma'am," replied the boy, with some pride in his tones.

"But, Mr. Haverstraw, you are entitled to remuneration for saving so much of our property from being stolen. Those men actually stripped our parlors of the most valuable of our bric-a-brac. I dare say \$3,000 would not have covered our loss had those thieves been successful."

"I do not deny that, Mrs. Woodman," Jasper answered, respectfully. "If your husband will put me in the way of a situation I shall be perfectly satisfied."

"He will certainly do that," she replied. "I think," with a smile, "I have already promised you that I would speak to him on the subject. That was before you put us under such obligations to you. Now I feel you have a right to expect us to do much better by you."

"All I ask is the opportunity to make a living. Being a stranger in Erie, it is a difficult matter to find a position suitable to my abilities. I am ambitious to get ahead on my merits. I think that is the best way."

Mrs. Woodman was quite taken with Jasper's frank and engaging manners, and his manly way.

She induced him to tell something about his previous life, and gradually drew from him the story of how Mr. and Mrs. Craddock, his mother's shiftless relatives, had got him to come to Erie for the selfish purpose of shifting to his young shoulders the burden of keeping their family pot a-boiling.

The lady and her niece expressed their indignation at the scheme, and their satisfaction on learning that the lad had cut loose from them at last.

"I'm afraid the 'Anchor Inn' isn't a very nice place for you to stay," said Mrs. Woodman, doubtfully.

"It is rather rough and ordinary, I admit; but it's cheap. Under present circumstances I cannot afford to quarrel with my place of shelter," replied Jasper, with a smile.

"As my husband may not be back for several days," said the lady, "you will let me advance you some money to carry you over your present difficulties, will you not?"

"I will accept it as a loan, to be repaid at some future time," replied Jasper.

"Very well, if you insist on having it that way, but I would much rather you would take it as a present."

She handed him twenty dollars from her pocketbook.

"Now, you must not think of returning to the lake front at this hour of the morning, Mr. Haverstraw. I have

a spare chamber upstairs which you may occupy. I shall expect you to have breakfast with us, and we can have another talk about your future prospects, in which, I assure you, I feel a deep interest."

"You are very kind to say so, Mrs. Woodman, and I appreciate it very much."

The lady of the house laughed, and then told her niece to show Jasper to his room.

After that the aunt and niece had a little talk about the boy before they finally went to bed.

The Woodman household didn't breakfast till late next morning, and soon after that a telephone message from police headquarters notified Mrs. Woodman that she would have to appear in court at the examination of the prisoners, and she was expected to bring Haverstraw with her.

Mrs. Woodman, her niece and Jasper, accordingly, were present in the police court when Snorker and Huskey were brought to the bar.

Their evidence, with that furnished by the officers who had made the arrests, caused the prisoners to be remanded for trial.

Mrs. Woodman then insisted that Haverstraw return to the house to take lunch with them.

He readily consented, and improved the occasion to advance himself in the good graces of Mabel Channing.

It was evident that the young people had taken quite a fancy to each other.

Jasper felt rather ill at ease on account of his shabby clothes, but the ladies treated him just as if his garments were of the finest texture, and of the most approved cut and finish.

It was not till the middle of the afternoon that Haverstraw turned up at the "Anchor Inn" again.

The barkeeper asked him where he had been.

"Dan Tucker has been in quite a stew over your disappearance," he said.

"Where is he now?"

"Somewhere about the docks. He said he had a job for you."

While they were speaking Dan came in.

"So you've turned up at last, eh?" asked Tucker, grabbing him by the hand. "Come, now, where did you go last night?"

"Come over and sit down and I'll tell you all about it."

They took possession of a nearby table, and then Jasper told Dan all about his adventures since they parted company the previous evening.

Dan expressed his astonishment at the narrative, and then congratulated his companion on the friends he had made.

"I dare say you'll get a good job just as soon as Mr. Woodman returns from Buffalo. He's the most important ship agent in Erie, and he'll be able to take care of you all right. I suppose there's no use asking you to take the job I have found for you."

"What is it?" asked Jasper, with some curiosity.

"The owner of the Sally Ann has secured another coal charter—I don't know how many thousand tons this time



—but I understand it'll take a good many trips across the lake to Port Edward to fill the contract. He hired me right off the reel, and you also on my recommendation. It means steady work for several weeks for both of us; enough to put us on our pins again. But I may as well tell you it's hard and dirty work, labor you've not been used to, and now that your prospects have brightened up I can hardly expect you will pard in with me. Sorry, for I've taken a liking to you, Jas, and I hate to part from you."

"Same here, Dan. What does this job of yours pay?"

"Seventy-five cents a day. There'll be five of us and the skipper, all told."

"I'll tell you what, Dan, I've a great mind to go with you, if only for the novelty of the thing. I've always had a yearning for the water, and this will be a chance to gratify it."

"But, much as I'd like to have you with me, I'm bound to say that Mr. Woodman can easily get you a better job—a position more suitable to your education and appearance."

"No doubt of that, Dan; but I guess Woodman's influence will keep. I'd like to make one trip across the lake at least. I assure you I have no objection to roughing it. In fact, I think a little hard work would do me good after the lazy spell I've had."

"Well, you're the doctor, Jas. If you want to give it up after a single trip it will be easy to find somebody to step into your shoes."

"All right. Then we'll consider the matter settled."

"Come down the street with me and I'll take you aboard the Sally Ann, and show you around the schooner."

Jasper was willing, so the two boys left the "Anchor Inn" and started for the wharf alongside which the Sally Ann was moored.

She was a dirty little fore-and-after, of a carrying capacity of about 200 tons.

The accommodations for both skipper and crew were of the most meager kind and rather jarred upon Jasper's nerves, in spite of his avowed readiness to rough it.

However, he determined not to back out just because things were not nice enough to suit his taste, though he couldn't help wondering what Mabel Channing would say if she saw the surroundings he had elected to make his own even for the briefest period of time.

"I'll stick it out one trip if I break a leg," he thought, grimly. "It will be a new experience for me, and I rather like new experiences. I don't believe that it will be any worse than what I had to put up with at the Craddocks'. I think that was about the worst ever. How I ever managed to stick it out six weeks astonishes me, now, when I come to think of it."

After Jasper had seen all he wanted of the Sally Ann, Dan took him up one of the adjacent streets to introduce him to the owner.

His name was Bimler, and he lived in a modest-looking two-story frame dwelling that didn't speak any too well of the owner's prosperity.

The trouble with Bimler was he lacked ambition.

He might have kept the Sally Ann constantly employed if he had got a hustle on and looked up chances that were constantly happening.

When he put in a successful bid for carrying a few thousand tons of coal across to Port Edward, the Sally Ann always came back from her trips empty, when other craft in the business frequently secured a cargo of lumber on the other side, and thus earned a double profit.

The Sally Ann was always idle for awhile between charters, too.

One never followed on the heels of another.

That would have been too much prosperity for Bimler.

He was contented to take the world easy, and was satisfied as long as he had enough to live on.

The idea of having a surplus in bank never occurred to him.

All this Jasper learned from Dan on his way to the owner's domicile.

"Well, if I owned the Sally Ann, as disreputable looking as she is, I'd keep her on the move, if I had to take a smaller profit at times in order to do so," remarked Jasper. "Some people don't know enough to take advantage of their chances in this world."

"That's right; and Bimler is one of them," replied Dan.

They found the schooner's owner all cramped up with rheumatism, sitting by a window, through which the bright afternoon sun poured.

"This is my friend, Haverstraw," said Dan, by way of introduction.

"Glad to know you, young man," said Bimler, holding out his hand. "Tucker said you was all right, and I guess you are by your looks. I've shipped you at his request. The Sally Ann will sail some time on Saturday. Tucker will show you the ropes, so by the time you've made your first trip you'll be as good as any aboard, I reckon. The Sally will make about twenty trips this time before she takes another rest."

From which remark it was evident Bimler's contract called for the conveyance of about 4,000 tons from Erie to Port Edward.

"Do you know, Dan, if I had a couple hundred of dollars I'd try and go into the coal carrying business myself," said Jasper to Dan, with some enthusiasm, as they were walking back to the "Anchor Inn."

Tucker looked at his companion in surprise.

"What put that idea into your head?" he asked.

"Several things. What you told me about Bimler, for one, and what Bimler said about the profits he makes, for another. There must be money in it when such a fellow as Bimler makes a living out of it in his half-shod way of doing business."

"But Bimler has one advantage—he owns his vessel. It isn't easy to find an unemployed craft of her tonnage around the lake that you could snap up at a bargain. Then, again, you wouldn't be able to get a coal charter, even if you had the outfit, unless you were favorably known to some vessel agent."

"What's the matter with Woodman? I'll bet I could



got Mrs. Woodman to talk her husband over to helping me out in such a scheme. She's mighty eager to do something for me since I saved her property from those burglars."

"That's all right, Jas," said Dan. "But I'm afraid you couldn't make it pay without having some general insight into the business."

"Oh, I don't know," replied Jasper, confidently. "I don't believe in wasting my time working for other people on a small salary when I see a chance of pulling out good money as my own boss. I've got interested in this scheme. I'm going to see what information I can find out about this charter business on this trip across the lake in the Sally Ann. You've had a good bit of experience yourself, Dan, and ought to be able to put me next to the inside workings of it."

"I'm ready to tell you all I know, if it will do you any good."

"That's what I want you to do. Then I'll look into things over at Port Edward, so that by the time we shall have got back to Erie I may have a plan to set before Mr. Woodman."

"Well, you seem to be out for business from the word go," remarked Dan, admiringly.

"That's what I am."

"And yesterday you were ready to take any old job, to put a dollar in your pocket."

"That's right, too. But I'm looking at things differently just now. There are times when it's the correct thing to work for others, but you can't expect to get ahead very fast that way. I believe in keeping your eye always on the lookout for a chance to better yourself, and when the chance comes in sight to seize and push it through for all it's worth. Those are my sentiments."

## CHAPTER VII.

### JASPER DECIDES TO GO INTO BUSINESS FOR HIMSELF.

Jasper laid out half of the twenty dollars he got from Mrs. Woodman in a new suit of substantial ready-made clothes.

With a part of the balance he bought a new hat and other needful articles.

When dressed up, Haverstraw made a very creditable appearance.

In fact, he was quite a handsome boy.

Mrs. Woodman invited him to take dinner on the coming Sunday, and Jasper had accepted; but now since he had engaged to leave Erie on the Sally Ann on Saturday he decided it would be the proper thing for him to visit the Woodman home and explain how circumstances would prevent him from calling on Sunday as arranged.

When he rang the bell at the Blank Avenue house the servant, who had seen him only in his shabby attire, didn't

recognize him, and showed him into the parlor, while she went upstairs to announce his arrival.

Mabel rushed down to greet him, and when she entered the parlor hardly knew him at first, so changed was he.

"What! don't you know me, Miss Mabel?" he said, coming forward, as she stopped and looked at him with some hesitation in her manner.

"Why, it is you, Jasper Haverstraw, isn't it?" she exclaimed, delightedly. "Do you know, for the moment I didn't recognize you."

"Decent clothes do make a difference after all, don't they?" he said, with a laugh.

"Yes," she admitted. "They certainly make a great change in the outward appearance of a person, but they don't make a man a gentleman if he isn't one already by nature and education."

"I won't dispute that point with you, Miss Mabel."

"It was very good of you to call so soon again. I hope you mean to stay to tea?"

"I couldn't refuse such an invitation from so charming a person as Miss Channing," he replied, gallantly.

"Well, upon my word, you said that very nicely," she replied, with a blush. "Really, I think you are improving wonderfully."

"You couldn't expect me to do otherwise under the influence of your fascinating presence, could you?"

"Dear me, what big words you are using!" she exclaimed. "You must have been reading a dictionary since I saw you last."

"Hardly that," with a laugh. "I haven't seen a dictionary since I left the Academy in Germantown."

"Well, aunt will be delighted to see you. She went downtown to do some shopping. I expect her back any moment now."

"One of the reasons I called this afternoon was to tell your aunt that I shall be unable to come to dinner on Sunday as I promised to do."

"Indeed! She will be sorry to hear that, as she wanted you to meet Mr. Woodman, who will be home Saturday. May I ask why you cannot come?"

"Certainly. I have arranged to leave Erie on the schooner Sally Ann, Saturday, for Port Edward, in Canada."

"Do you really mean that?" asked Mabel, in a tone of evident disappointment.

"Yes, but I'll be back again by the first of the ensuing week."

"Oh!" she said, brightening up again.

"I'll tell you how it came about."

Whereupon he told her how his friend, Dan Tucker, had shipped him as a hand on the coalcarrying schooner without his knowledge.

"Dear me, I shouldn't think you'd like to go across the lake in a vessel carrying coal," she said, with a little shrug of her pretty shoulders.

"I have an object in it, Miss Mabel. Perhaps I'll tell you all about it when I come back next week."

"I hope you will, for I'm just dying to know what could



induce you to ship as an ordinary sailor on a schooner when you might do ever so much better on shore."

Jasper changed the conversation to other topics, and soon afterward Mrs. Woodman came home and greeted the boy in the most friendly manner.

She, too, was surprised to learn of his intended trip to Canada in the Sally Ann.

"I'm afraid you won't like it," she remarked, with a deprecatory sort of smile.

Jasper took his leave soon after tea, promising to call and see Mr. Woodman when he returned from Port Edward in the schooner.

When Jasper (in his old clothes) and Tucker reported on board of the Sally Ann, Saturday morning, she was lying at one of the Pennsylvania Coal Company's wharves with a coal chute pointed into her main hatch, and the black diamonds thundering down in a ceaseless and dusty stream.

Within an hour the loading of the schooner was completed, then a tug came alongside and the vessel was towed out of harbor, sail was set, and under a fair breeze the Sally Ann headed across the lake for Port Edward.

It was a delightful day.

The weather had moderated greatly, and the sun had a spring-like warmth that was uncommonly pleasant after the late snow storm.

As the slant of wind they had started with held steady, there wasn't much to occupy the attention of the small crew of the schooner.

Jasper and Dan hung around the mainmast and talked.

"How much do you suppose it costs to run this vessel a day, Dan?" asked Jasper.

"I couldn't say, exactly, but I should think about ten dollars."

"What other expenses are there?"

"I couldn't mention them all. They depend on circumstances. There's tug hire for one thing, and a very important item that is when the wind is contrary or very light, as often happens. You know a craft of this kind depends altogether on her sails. The run is short, back and forth, but you can't always tell how long it will take, because the wind is frequently against us. Sometimes the schooner has to be towed all the way across, and that eats a big hole in the profits."

"I should think it would," remarked Jasper.

"Now on this contract I happen to know that Bimler gets free loading only. It will cost him 25 cents a ton on the other side to get the cargo on to the dock."

"I should think that was quite an item, for I learned from the skipper that he is getting a low rate on this coal charter—\$1.15 a ton, I think, and as we are carrying but a fraction over 200 tons, that will give him say \$180 out of which to pay all expenses and make a profit."

"Well, he can make a fair profit if luck favors him. On this trip we'll lose to-morrow, because it's Sunday."

"Why didn't he hold back until Monday. It would have saved him a day's expenses at least?"

"It's likely he had to take his load to-day, owing to other

arrangements made by the Pennsylvania Coal Company. There you have another of the unforeseen and unavoidable extras."

"It's a wonder Bimler wouldn't look for a lumber haul back to Erie or vicinity. I should, if I were in his shoes."

"Bimler is an old fossil. Besides, he is bunged up with the rheumatism."

"What if he is. Couldn't he get a shipping agent to do the business for him?"

"Sure he could; but he doesn't bother."

"Well, I just wish the Sally Ann belonged to me, that's all. I'd make her hum," said Jasper, with an ambitious glow in his eyes.

The wind began to drop soon after the Canadian shore was sighted, and by dark the sails hung limp and motionless, while the vessel drifted ahead with the tide.

"It may hold this way all night," remarked Dan to Jasper, when the two boys came on deck after the evening meal. "However, it doesn't matter much, as to-morrow's Sunday. As soon as we get well in shore we'll come to anchor and lie there all day. Then we'll get a tug Monday morning unless the wind is favorable for running into the basin."

The Sally Ann came to anchor about two in the morning.

Next day was quite cool, but otherwise as fine as silk, with a light breeze, which they took advantage of to move closer in.

As there happened to be only one vessel unloading in the basin, the schooner didn't have long to wait for her turn on Monday morning.

But the weather happened to be dead calm, so a tug had to come out and tow the vessel up to the dock, where, within a short time, a big gang of shovellers were set to work getting the coal out of her hold.

While this was going on, Jasper went ashore by himself, after he had watched the men for some little time, and devoted his eyes and ears to picking up all the information he could upon the subject nearest his heart.

It took a good part of the day to unload, and it was not until the middle of the afternoon that a tug came alongside of the Sally Ann, hove a line aboard and hauled her down the harbor and out abreast of the lighthouse, where she cast off, leaving the vessel to take advantage of a lively and favorable wind which promised to waft the schooner across to Erie in a satisfactory space of time.

The Sally Ann arrived in port Tuesday morning early, hauled in to her own wharf and Skipper Brown went ashore to report to Bimler.

Within half an hour he reappeared, walking briskly toward the schooner.

"Something is up," remarked Dan, who was sunning himself on the wharf beside Jasper.

"What makes you think there is?" asked Haverstraw, in surprise.

"I can tell by Brown's actions."

"What can it be?"

"Oh, come now, I'm not gifted with second sight. All I can say is, something has upset the skipper."



"It's nothing to do with us, I guess," said Jasper.

Pretty soon Brown came up and halted in front of them.

"What do you think," he said. "Bimler has gone off his hooks."

"Gone off his hooks!" repeated Jasper, somewhat mystified by the remark. "What do you mean by that?"

"What do I mean? Why, that he's dead, of course."

"Go on!" gasped Dan, with an incredulous stare.

"It's a fact. The rheumatism went to his heart, and he turned up his toes Saturday night about dark."

"Gee whiz!" exclaimed Dan.

"He'll be planted this morning."

"And who gets the schooner—his nephew?"

"I reckon," nodded the skipper, going aboard to carry the news to the others.

"That settles it," said Dan, with a snort of disgust.

"Things will go on the hog for fair."

"How is that?" asked Jasper, with some interest.

"Because Higgings—that's the chap's name—isn't worth the powder it would take to blow him up. He's lazy and good-for-nothing. He could no more run the business than he could fly."

"What will he do, then, do you think?"

"He'll rent the schooner or put her up at auction and sell her, see if he doesn't."

"And what about the coal charter?" asked Jasper, in some excitement.

"He'll sell it or let it go by the board."

"He will?"

"He will, as sure as you're sitting there."

"Then I'm going to make it my business to call on him directly after the funeral."

"What for?" asked Dan, in some astonishment.

"I'm going to hire this schooner from him, and take the contract off his hands."

"The dickens you are!"

"Yes, Dan, that's exactly what I'm going to do—provided, of course, Mr. Woodman will see me through the deal. I'm going to call at the Blank Avenue house right away and set the ball rolling," and Jasper got on his feet with a business-like air.

## CHAPTER IX.

### JASPER BECOMES A COAL CARGO CONTRACTOR.

Jasper Haverstraw, accompanied by Dan, went at once to the "Anchor Inn" where he had left his best clothes, dressed himself in a presentable manner, and started to make his call at the Woodman home on Blank Avenue.

He arrived there about eleven o'clock, and was received with pleasure by Mrs. Woodman and Mabel.

They were both curious to learn how he had liked his trip across the lake in the coal schooner.

"I had an easy time of it, as the weather was compara-

tively mild and the wind fair both ways. We scarcely had to start a rope."

"Weren't you seasick at all?" asked Mabel, roguishly.

"Oh, no. I enjoyed every moment I was away. Had the weather been rough I suppose I should have a different tale to tell."

"You were fortunate."

"Mr. Woodman was very much amused when I told him you had gone on such a trip. He is well acquainted with the class of vessels of which the Sally Ann is a type," said Mrs. Woodman, with a smile. "He thought a single trip across the lake in the schooner would cure you of the desire to engage in such business. The pay is very poor, the work rough and often hard, and the associations very much below the level of an educated and progressive boy like I described you to be. He is anxious to see you, and will do all in his power to place you in a position where your talents will be appreciated, and you will have the opportunity to advance in life."

"I am very much obliged to your husband for his good intentions, Mrs. Woodman," replied Jasper. "I may say that I called here this morning for the purpose of meeting him, as I have a business proposition I want to submit to him."

"You will find him at his office, and you may be sure he will be very glad to see you. I will run upstairs and telephone him that you are coming down."

Mrs. Woodman left the room.

"Now, Mr. Haverstraw," said Mabel, "you made a promise to me before you went away. I want you to keep it."

"What did I promise you?"

"You said when you came back you would tell me the reason why you made this trip across the lake to Port Edward."

"That's right. But I thought you had forgotten all about it," laughed Jasper.

"Did you? You see you are wrong. It's a dangerous thing to arouse a lady's curiosity."

"A young lady's curiosity," corrected Jasper.

"Oh, I don't think age makes any difference in the matter," replied the girl, demurely. "We all have a bit of Mother Eve in us."

"So you want me to take you into my confidence, do you?"

"Well, you know a promise is a promise," she remarked, engagingly. "If the matter was a real secret, you shouldn't—"

"Oh, I'm perfectly willing to tell you, only you must promise not to laugh at me."

"Of course I promise that," she answered, with some curiosity.

"Very well. The fact of the matter then is this, Miss Mabel, I went on the Sally Ann to get a clearer insight into the coal-chartering business."

"Oh!"

"And—now, don't laugh—I have been thinking of going into the business on my own hook if I could get the requi-



site backing. It strikes me as a good money-making enterprise—much better, in fact, than working in an office for small wages. You see, I am ambitious to get ahead, and from what I have learned about the possibilities of the business I am anxious to take a shy at it. It offers inducements to a hustler with a little capital. I haven't the little capital, it is true, but I had the idea that maybe Mr. Woodman would not object to give me a lift. He is thoroughly acquainted with the details of the business, as he is a vessel agent and deals in charters. It is a rather nervy thing for me to suggest to him, I am willing to admit, but nothing ventured, nothing gained, you know. It is his privilege to turn me down, of course, but at least I mean to lay the matter before him."

"He won't turn you down, Mr. Haverstraw, if your proposition is at all reasonable," assured Mabel.

"Now, until this morning I wasn't quite sure how I could present the subject in a way that would enlist his favorable consideration. But when the Sally Ann came into port this morning a surprise awaited all hands."

"A surprise?"

"Yes. The schooner is owned by a man named Bimler, who has made his living by securing occasional contracts to carry a certain number of tons of coal from this city to Port Edward. His present charter calls for 4,000 tons, the first 200 of which we carried across the lake Saturday. Well, Mr. Bimler died suddenly Saturday night. He is to be buried to-day."

"Dear me."

"His only heir is a nephew, a shiftless sort of fellow, I understand. He inherits the old man's cottage and the business, which means the Sally Ann and the present coal contract. My friend Tucker, who worked for Bimler last fall and the early part of the winter, gave me a clear estimate of this person's character. He says he's not at all capable of running the business of his late uncle; in fact, he has no ambition in that line at all. His idea of perfect happiness is to hang around the wharves and do nothing. He will probably sell or rent the schooner, and live on the proceeds. I saw my opportunity at once. If Mr. Woodman will back me, I'll rent the Sally Ann, carry out Bimler's uncompleted charter, and then bid for more business of the same kind. I am satisfied I can make a success of it."

Mabel Channing looked at the enthusiastic face of their visitor and smiled encouragingly.

"You are certainly the right kind of boy to succeed in whatever you may take hold of."

"Thank you, Miss Mabel," he answered, in a gratified tone. "Then you don't see anything ridiculous in my project?"

"Certainly not," with an approving nod of her head. "I think you show yourself to be uncommonly smart, and," with a mischievous little laugh, "I do like smart boys."

"From which I may infer that you like me?" he asked, boldly.

"Of course I like you," she admitted, with a rosy blush.

"If I didn't——"

"Well?" inquiringly.

"That's all."

"But you didn't finish your sentence," persisted Jasper.

"It's a lady's privilege to stop when she thinks proper, Mr. Haverstraw."

"All right. Let it go at that. I'm pleased to know that you like me. I may say I entertain similar sentiments with regard to yourself. I may also add that you are the nicest girl I ever met."

"You certainly are not a bashful young man," pouted Mabel, with a pleased smile.

"I can't help telling the truth."

"I am sure I ought to feel highly complimented."

"I hope we shall always be good friends," he said, earnestly.

"I am sure we shall."

Mabel's aunt entered at this point in their *tete-a-tete*.

"Mr. Woodman will be glad to see you at the office any time to-day. I told him you would certainly call."

"I will go there at once," said Jasper, rising.

"But you mustn't run away so quick. I want you to stay to lunch."

"I hope you will excuse me this time," he answered, politely. "I am anxious to see Mr. Woodman on important business."

"Oh, then, we will not detain you. But you must promise to call again soon. Mabel is——"

"Now, auntie!" exclaimed the pretty miss, blushing furiously.

"I will call as soon as possible, with pleasure," said Jasper, glancing at Miss Channing.

Then he took his leave.

Half an hour later he was admitted to Mr. Woodman's private office.

That gentleman expressed the pleasure he felt in making Haverstraw's acquaintance, thanked him in unmistakable terms for the service he had rendered him in saving his property from the burglars, and asked him what he could do for him to testify his appreciation of the same.

Jasper immediately laid his plan before him.

"Well," said Mr. Woodman, "you certainly possess the courage of your convictions, and I see no reason why I shouldn't assist you in carrying out your plan. If you fail you will be no worse off than you are now, and it will be a bit of business experience for you. I knew Bimler well, though I have no acquaintance whatever with his nephew. Bimler bid in that charter under the market price, and should at least have got a rate 'free in and out'—that is, no expense of either loading or unloading. As it stands, the contract brings in only 90 cents a ton, and the Sally Ann has a capacity of only 200 tons. Bimler was a queer business man. I have always wondered how he managed to make a living. Well, I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll see what arrangements I can make for you with this man Higgings. He will probably want anywhere from \$6 to \$8 a day rent for the schooner, if he doesn't intend to use her himself. The other running expenses will be——"

"I've found out all about that," said Haverstraw, eagerly. "Seventy-five cents a day for the men, and \$1.25 for



Brown, the skipper. Then provisions, tug hire, and half a dozen other items, amounting to about so much," concluded Jasper, naming a gross sum.

"I see you know something about the business already," said Mr. Woodman, a bit surprised.

"It isn't my plan to go into a scheme without first having learned all the details it is possible to get hold of."

"Quite right," replied Mr. Woodman, approvingly, his estimate of Haverstraw's natural abilities advancing several pegs.

"If I succeed in getting hold of this business, sir, and it proves sufficiently profitable under my management for me to continue, I hope you will have no objection to act as my agent on the regular commission you charge others."

Mr. Woodman laughed.

"Certainly not. I will open a regular account with you. Well, I wish you all success. I must say you interest me very much, indeed, and I shall watch your progress, and do all I can to assist you to the success I am sure you deserve."

"Thank you, sir."

"You owe me no thanks. The boot is on the other leg. I will attend to your matter this afternoon. Where is this Higgings to be found?"

Jasper told him that Bimler's nephew was likely to be found at the cottage after the funeral.

"Very well. Call here some time to-morrow morning. In case Higgings is prepared to make the deal, I can easily have the coal contract with the Pennsylvania Coal Company transferred regularly to you."

Jasper then returned to the schooner and found Dan hanging around the wharf waiting for him to show up.

He told the boy what he had done, and Tucker gave a whistle of astonishment.

"So you may likely become our boss, eh?"

"I hope so."

"Well, you're a wonder, upon my soul you are."

A representative of Mr. Woodman's called on Higgings that afternoon and had no difficulty in putting the deal through, Higgings agreeing to rent the Sally Ann for the season for \$45 a month, this to include the coal contract, which it is probable he could not have disposed of anyway, as the rate had gone up.

Haverstraw therefore came into possession of Bimler's business, and it was up to him to see what he could make out of it.

## CHAPTER X.

### OVERBOARD.

As soon as all arrangements had been completed satisfactorily by which Haverstraw came into Bimler's cargo contracting business, the boy notified the Pennsylvania Coal Company that he was ready to take another load of coal on board the Sally Ann.

He was told to bring the vessel around to the chutes at once.

Accordingly, he gave Skipper Brown orders to that effect, and the schooner was worked up to the coal company's dock.

"I s'pose you'll make your office in Erie," said Dan, who was in high spirits over his companion's streak of luck, as he called it.

"Not at all, Dan; at least not at present. I'm going across with you as one of my own hands."

"The dickens you are!" exclaimed Dan, in surprise.

"That's right. I'm not going to play the gentleman. I've got too much at stake. Mr. Woodman is backing me up in this, but I mean to pay him back every cent he has advanced me. I am going to be thoroughly independent from the start. This is my idea, and I propose to push it through on my ability alone. Bimler made a living at it in his way; I'm going to make more than a mere living out of it in my way. The way to do that is to put your shoulder to the wheel. I'm going to hustle on the other side for a return freight—either lumber, or merchandise, or any old thing, in fact, that promises a profit. This coal contract is all very well in its way, but Bimler took it in too low. Jordon, who runs the Medusa, is getting \$1.25 a ton from the Pennsylvania people, with free loading at both ends, that's 35 cents a ton better than me, and the Medusa carries over 300 at that. I'll have to make 19 more trips yet to close up the Bimler contract. That'll take time, and I'm going to fill in the chinks with something else, if it's to be got."

"You're a hustling hairpin for fair!"

"Well, I told you if I got hold of the Sally Ann I'd make the fur fly."

"That's what you did, and I hope you'll do it."

"Thank you, Dan. I know you're a good friend of mine, and you shan't lose anything by it. As soon as I get on my feet I'm going to give you a small interest in the business."

"You don't mean it!" exclaimed Tucker, hardly believing such good luck would come his way.

"I do mean it. I like you, Dan. You stood by me when I was put out of the house by the Craddocks, and I appreciate it. An honest, square friend is not to be found every day. Almost everybody in this world seems to be cutting his neighbor's throat in the race for a living. That isn't my way at present, and I trust it may never be. I mean to help you to rise in the world, and all I ask of you in return is a faithful regard for my interests."

"Then you can depend on me every time, bet your bottom dollar!" cried Dan, enthusiastically.

"I think I can. I feel sure there are lots of ways you can help me out until I get the hang of the business, and I'm going to make it worth your while."

When the loading of the Sally Ann had almost been completed, Skipper Brown came up to Jasper and told him that two of the crew had lit out.

"Well, we'll have to fill their places with others. What was the reason they quit?"

"Kicked at the idea of working for a young fellow like



you, who a couple of days ago seemed to be no better than themselves."

"That was it, eh? They were foolish. Dan will get a couple of new hands up at the 'Anchor Inn,' I guess."

"He'd better get them, then, for we haven't any time to lose. We've got to haul out of the way here just as soon as the last ton of coal is aboard. That craft yonder, with the tug alongside, is waiting to come to the chutes."

"I expect Dan any minute. I sent him up the street for supplies for this trip."

A few minutes later Jasper saw the skipper talking to a couple of bearded men on the wharf.

Presently he joined the young cargo contractor.

"There are two strong chaps yonder," he said. "One of them has worked on the lake, and the other is willing to take hold and do his best. I advise you to hire them."

"I'll leave that to you if you think they're all right."

"It won't do much harm trying them one trip, anyway. The weather promises well for the run across."

"All right. Go ahead."

Accordingly, Skipper Brown engaged the men who had been loitering on the wharf for the last half hour, and they came aboard.

The taller one gave a start, and said something to his companion in a low tone as soon as his eyes lighted on Jasper.

They did not approach where the boy stood, but retired forward and awaited orders.

Five minutes later Dan came riding down on a tradesman's wagon, which carried the stuff the lad had purchased for the schooner.

He and another hand carried the stuff aboard and into the galley half of the deck house.

About that time a tug, furnished by Mr. Woodman, but charged to Haverstraw's account, according to arrangements, came alongside and a deck hand tossed a small hawser aboard, which was made fast forward.

Just as soon as the chutes were hauled in, Brown gave the signal to cast off.

The tug tooted shrilly and started ahead, hauling the Sally Ann clear of the dock.

The weather, as Skipper Brown had intimated, was all to the good.

The stiff breeze from the southwest favored them, and every stitch of canvas, jibs and all was spread to it, as soon as the tug signalled to cast off the tow-line.

It was now about dusk, and the man who acted as cook was getting supper in the galley.

The sky was clear away down to the water-line, and as the moon would rise in an hour or so, they were sure of a beautiful night.

"It's better to be born lucky than rich," remarked Dan, who was at the wheel, to Jasper, who stood beside him, watching the sails drawing beautifully, his blood leaping through his veins with delight as he felt the easy, gliding motion of the Sally Ann cutting her way through the dancing wavelets of Lake Erie.

"What do you mean by that?" asked his friend, the young contractor.

"Why, you're starting off on your first trip in mighty fine shape. This breeze is almost certain to follow us all the way to Port Edward."

"I'm glad to know that."

"Of course you are. By the way, I see you've got a couple of new chaps aboard. What was the matter with Aitkin and Saunders?"

"Quit."

"What for?" in surprise.

"Got a bug in their heads 'cause I became their boss."

"You don't say. Well, I guess we can spare them. Where did you pick those two up? One seems to know his business all right, for I've watched 'em, but I can't say much for the other. He doesn't act as if he'd ever been aboard a vessel before."

"I'm not obliged to keep him after we get back," said Jasper.

"No. I can get you all the good men you want right out of the 'Anchor.'"

"I'd better light the binnacle lamp for you, hadn't I?"

"I wish you would. By the way, here's an afternoon paper in my pocket. Pick it out and glance over the news."

Jasper took hold of the paper, and holding it down near the light began to look it over.

"Hello!" he exclaimed, suddenly. "Several prisoners confined in the county jail got away this morning, through an old disused sewer. All have been recaptured but two."

"Those two were lucky."

"And who do you suppose they are?"

"Come now, ask me something easier than that."

"Why, Snorker and Huskey, the chaps I euchred on Blank Avenue."

"You don't say!"

"That's what the paper says."

"They must be pretty slippery rascals."

"I'm sorry they got away. They deserve five years apiece, and would have got it had they been tried."

"Oh, the police will have them again before we get back."

"I trust they will."

At that moment Jasper was called to supper, and he went into the small cabin abaft the galley, where he found the skipper already seated.

The crew took their meals in the galley, and bunked in a small, dingy forecabin in the bows.

When Jasper came out on deck again he saw the full moon rising in the distance.

A Swede named Jansen was now at the wheel, while Dan and the others were eating in the galley.

There was a trifle more weight in the breeze, and the schooner was heeling over to it in fine style, every sail bellying out as stiff as a board.

Jasper looked over the stern and noted the white water boiling up from the rudder post, and spreading out into a creamy wake for a hundred feet away.

When he saw Dan come out of the galley he joined him amidsthips, and the two walked up and down on the weather



side, talking about the future until eight o'clock, when the watch was changed.

Jasper, Dan and the Swede were in one watch, while Brown and the two new hands constituted the other.

Haverstraw and the skipper bunked in the cabin.

When Jasper turned in the taller of the bearded strangers, who had given his name as Buckley, was at the wheel, and he steered like an old-timer.

The young cargo contractor fell asleep almost as soon as his head touched the pillow of his bunk, but strange to relate his sleep was troubled with ugly dreams.

He thought he was walking along a lonesome road, bordered with thick trees, through which the moonlight shone in patches.

A curious sensation, as if he was being dogged and watched, came over him, yet he could see no one on either side of the road.

Suddenly he came to a turn in the way and there, in the full glare of the moonshine, he saw two familiar faces—the faces of Snorker and Huskey.

Their unshaven faces looked more repulsive than ever, and they glared at him in a particularly vindictive way.

Their appearance gave him such a shock that he woke up with a start and sat bolt upright in his bunk.

Something like a tall shadow, which seemed to have been hovering over the bunk, drew back suddenly.

Then it passed quickly out on to the deck.

Jasper's senses were somewhat confused by his abrupt awakening and he didn't get a clear view of the man, whoever he was, who had been in the cabin a moment before, but still he knew it wasn't the skipper, who was the only one beside himself who had any right there, because Brown was short and chunky.

The intruder was a tall man, and it struck Haverstraw that he had a full beard—in other words, he was the counterpart of Buckley.

Jasper got up and looked out astern.

The other bearded man, who called himself Cooper, was at the wheel.

The boy was on the point of asking him if he had seen any one come out of the cabin, but on second thought concluded not to.

He went back, opened the door into the galley, passed through that contracted room and looked out forward.

He saw a figure on the forecastle deck which he recognized as Brown, looking off to the northeast at a lake steamer which was crossing their path a quarter of a mile ahead.

The man Buckley he couldn't see at all.

Jasper waited at the galley door until he saw Brown start back along the deck, then he discerned a long, moving shadow, painted on the deck by the moonbeams, sliding forward over the planks, and presently Buckley hove in sight from behind the shelter of the deck house, walked slowly to the foremast and stopped there.

The young cargo contractor pondered a few minutes and then returned to his bunk.

It was some little time before he got to sleep again.

He was bothered by no more dreams, and the next thing he was aware of was the hand of Brown upon his shoulder, shaking him.

"Twelve o'clock," said the skipper, tersely.

Jasper turned out at once and put his clothes on, for it was his turn to stand watch with Dan and the Swede till four in the morning.

The wind still blew from the same quarter and the schooner was humming on her course when he joined Dan at the wheel.

"We'll be well in to the Canadian shore when the other watch comes on again," said Tucker, in a tone of satisfaction. "We are making a splendid run of it this trip. The old hooker is reeling off her ten knots in great shape. If we don't lose any time in the basin you'll score a good profit, Jas, sure as you live."

As Dan had remarked, the shore of Canada was broad on the starboard bow at four a. m. when the mid-watch was relieved.

Jasper wasn't sorry to get under the bedclothes once more, and he was soon fast asleep.

The raw dawn of April 1 was just lighting up the eastern sky when Haverstraw was rudely awakened.

A tall, bearded form bent over him in the gloom of the cabin.

Then he became conscious that his arms were bound behind him, and a handkerchief covered his mouth.

As he tried to struggle, a hoarse, sneering laugh vibrated in his ear, and a hissing voice sibilated:

"Your name is mud this time, young man. You did us up once, but it's our turn now. You'll be food for the fishes in about one minute."

It was the voice of Snorker, but the shadowy countenance that peered gloatingly into his was the face of Buckley.

He had little time to consider the matter, though, for he was lifted bodily from the bed, carried out through the door, and with a fleeting glimpse of another shadow at the wheel, he was launched over the rail and fell with a splash into the cold waters of Lake Erie.

## CHAPTER XI.

### SAVED.

The shock caused by his warm body, attired only in his undergarments, coming in contact with the chill water of the lake, made Jasper give a convulsive wrench of his arms.

This movement snapped the half-rotten line which had bound his wrists together, and freed his arms.

He went many feet under the surface, of course, but soon came up, like a cork.

Fortunately, Jasper was something of an aquatic expert. He was thoroughly at home in the water.

But the present conditions were rather unusual.

He was not only chilled by his unexpected plunge, but he was some distance from the Canadian shore.



When he reached the surface he was thoroughly awake and alive to the seriousness of his situation.

A light mist covered the waters of the lake, and through this foggy veil the boy caught a momentary view of the schooner's vanishing stern.

Then a dark object floated in front of him as he instinctively struck out with his arms, and he butted into—a boat. The skiff had been towed behind a lake schooner and the painter had broken loose, leaving her adrift.

He reached up and caught the gunwhale, hung on for a moment or two while he relieved his mouth of the handkerchief bound about it, then scrambled into the boat.

A pair of oars were lying across the seats, just as if placed there for his especial use.

He seized them and began to row in the direction the Sally Ann had vanished.

He rowed quick and vigorously at first to drive the chill out of his benumbed limbs.

As soon as the perspiration began to appear on his forehead he reduced his stroke to a long, steady pull, such as he had been trained to in his academy boat's crew, of which he had been the stroke oarsman.

By this time it was quite light.

Though he could not see any signs of the Canada shore, owing to the mist, still he knew it could not be far away.

As the first rays of the morning's sun began to gild the eastern sky, and pierce their glittering way through the mist, he heard the distant pulsations of a steamer approaching him.

It came on at a rapid rate.

All at once the mist seemed to fold up and vanish like a puff of white smoke, and there, less than a quarter of a mile away, heading directly for him, was a lake steamer, bound in for Port Edward, which was plainly to be seen now, a mile off.

As soon as she had cut the space which intervened between them down one-half, Jasper stood up and waved his oars.

He was seen, and presently the engines stopped coughing, and the steamer glided down upon him like a black specter in the sunshine.

Resuming his oars he rowed toward her, and was soon clinging to a rope ladder cast down to him by an officer in a gold-banded cap.

Abandoning the rowboat, to which he owed his preservation from death, he climbed quickly up the steamer's side and stepped on deck as she again resumed her course shoreward.

The officer regarded his half-clad figure in some astonishment.

"Well, young man," he said, "how comes it that we find you in this state nearly a mile off shore? You look as if you'd been in the water, too."

"I have. I'd consider it a great favor if you'd let me down in the boiler-room where I could dry these underclothes, and then loan me an old suit so I could get back to my schooner."

"Certainly. I guess we can help you out. Here, Sanders, take this boy down in the stoke hole."

Half an hour later the Dominion steamer St. John was at her wharf in Port Edward, and Jasper Haverstraw was explaining to the captain the circumstances which had brought him within the shadow of death.

"You've had a lucky escape, my lad. You ought to be able to catch the scoundrel who threw you overboard. The authorities will know how to deal with such a villain."

"I guess it will be something of a surprise for him to see me safe and sound after the bath he gave me. I should certainly have gone to the bottom and stayed there had not my hands, fortunately, come loose at the critical moment. Even that lucky circumstance would not have saved me but for the floating rowboat."

As soon as he could get away Jasper left the steamer.

As he could see no sign of the Sally Ann anywhere about he judged that she must have sailed straight on up to the coal dock in the basin.

In that direction he bent his steps, though it was a good long walk he had before him.

It was after nine o'clock when he got his first view of the schooner hauled alongside of the wharf, with a dozen or more coal shovelers working away on board of her for dear life, tossing the cargo of black diamonds ashore.

"Now I think I will rather astonish Mr. Snorker. I'll have him and his side partner, Cooper, who is surely Huskey in disguise, in jail in mighty short order. To think of those rascals shipping aboard my craft to get out of Erie!"

No one who knew Jasper Haverstraw would have recognized him in the shabby garments given him by the steamboat people as he walked down on the wharf and headed for the schooner.

He lounged up behind a tall spile head and scanned the Sally Ann's deck for a sight of the disguised Snorker and Huskey, but neither was in sight.

The Swede was at work in the galley, while Brown and Dan were in earnest conversation near the wheel.

Jasper waited a good quarter of an hour, but there was no sign of the rascals on board.

"They must have left immediately after the schooner hauled in to the dock," figured Jasper, with a sense of disappointment. "I shall not have the pleasure of putting them in jail after all."

Satisfied this was the true cause of the absence of the villains from the Sally Ann's deck, Jasper waited no longer, but hurried aboard and walked up to Dan and Skipper Brown.

"Jumping jewsharps!" exclaimed Tucker, in amazement, when he caught sight of Haverstraw.

Then he rushed to him and, catching Jasper in his arms, gave him a great hug.

"Where in thunder have you been? We were sure you'd fallen overboard somewhere off shore. We hunted every likely spot on the schooner for you. Where did you hide yourself? And what did you do it for?"

"I didn't hide myself anywhere. I haven't been aboard the Sally Ann since daylight."



"You haven't been aboard the Sally Ann since daylight," repeated Dan, with an incredulous stare. "You don't mean to say you jumped overboard and swam ashore, two or three miles at least, just for the fun of the thing, do you? That yarn's a little too tough for even sailors to swallow."

"I didn't say I jumped overboard and swam ashore."

"I know you didn't, but you said you haven't been on board the schooner since daylight."

"That's right."

"At daylight we were all of three miles to the sou'east of Port Edward. How the dickens could you have left the hooker without taking to the water? And you didn't take the boat, either."

"It does seem a mystery, doesn't it?" said Jasper, with a grin.

"Well, I should say!"

"Before I explain the riddle, let me ask where are the new men—Buckley and Cooper? I don't see them aboard the schooner."

"They went ashore as soon as we made fast to the dock, and I haven't seen them since," said Skipper Brown.

"It's too bad they got away," replied Jasper, "for they're escaped jail birds."

"The deuce you say!" almost gasped Brown. "How do you know that?"

"They, or rather Buckley, took good care I should know it. Dan, those two chaps are none other than Snorker and Huskey in disguise."

"Get out! You're joking."

"Am I? Well, listen to the story I've got to tell. Snorker, alias Buckley, bound and gagged me in my berth this morning at daylight, and then pitched me over the stern of the Sally Ann, to what the scoundrel considered certain death."

Dan was fairly staggered by Jasper's statement.

His eyes stuck out like saucers, and he opened his mouth to say something, but got no further than an inarticulate gurgle.

As for Brown, he simply looked amazed, and awaited further particulars.

Thereupon Jasper told the story of his narrow escape from death, and how he had finally been picked up by the Dominion steamer and brought into Port Edward.

"That beats any fairy tale I ever read," was Dan's comment.

"You must have been born with a caul, young man. Your rescue is remarkable," said Skipper Brown.

## CHAPTER XII.

### ASSAULTED IN THE DARK.

Jasper resumed his own clothes, which had not been disturbed in the cabin, and then went ashore to notify the authorities of the presence in the neighborhood of the es-

caped jail-birds—Snorker and Huskey—of whom he was able to give a very accurate description.

The Canadian police said they would make an effort to catch the two rascals, and if they succeeded would hold them pending extradition arrangements on the part of the State of Pennsylvania.

Jasper then hunted up several Dominion shippers, who had dealings with the United States, and told them he was prepared to carry freight across the lake to Buffalo, Erie and adjacent ports at a low rate and with despatch, wind permitting.

There was nothing doing, however, in his line just then, at least nothing the shippers cared to put in his way.

He then went to the office of a paper, which circulated among shippers generally, and paid for an advertisement to be inserted in the next half dozen issues, giving the address of a local agent, who agreed to act for him on the commission basis.

Then he returned on board the Sally Ann.

Just before the schooner was ready to leave the coal dock a man came down on the wharf and asked for Haverstraw.

Jasper was eating his dinner with Skipper Brown in the cabin, and the stranger was brought before him.

"My name is Haverstraw," said the young cargo contractor, when the man had introduced himself as Mr. Cole, proprietor of the Victoria Saw Mills.

"You are taking freight to Erie and neighboring places, I believe?" he said, coming directly to the object of his visit.

"Yes, sir," replied Jasper, with alacrity, scenting a cargo in the perspective.

"I have 1,000 bundles of shingles I want to send to Lakeport, New York. What will you charge to take them over?"

"Where am I to to pick them up?"

"At my private wharf, about a mile from here."

"Up the canal?"

The shipper nodded.

"Free loading at this end, I suppose?"

The man nodded again.

"With immediate dispatch?"

A third nod.

"I'll deliver them on the wharf at Lakeport, if you guarantee to make good any loss of time sustained by inability to secure immediate wharfage on the other side, for—so much," and Jasper named a low figure.

The man closed with him at once and went away.

After Jasper had finished his meal he sent Brown to arrange for his clearance papers, and hurried into the canal office close by and paid the tolls.

Then he notified a custom house officer that he was going up the canal, and the official came down to the schooner, made a superficial examination of the boat, and gave him permission to go ahead.

A tug was engaged to tow them up to the Victoria mills, and she made fast just as soon as the last shovelful of coal was on the dock.



It took about an hour to go up the canal, and the rest of the day and part of the evening to load the shingles on board.

When they got back to the harbor they found the water rough and the wind contrary for a propitious start across the lake.

About two in the morning the wind changed in their favor, and a tug was sent for which towed them outside the lighthouse.

A nasty cross sea was running, which caused the schooner to jump about like a frisky colt.

Jasper was soon down on his back as sick as he could be.

What with the loss of two hands, and the young contractor himself knocked out, the Sally Ann was so short-handed that the skipper, Dan and the Swede had to turn to and do double work under unfavorable circumstances at that.

But the wind was in the right direction, though it blew half a gale, and the vessel buckled down to her work nobly, riding the waves like a duck, and making excellent progress.

The weather moderated with the rising of the sun, though the lake remained very rough all the way to Lakeport, where they arrived about noon, and were so fortunate as to find the wharf, to which they had been directed, ready to receive them.

By this time Jasper was on his pins again.

He soon arranged to have the shingles carried ashore at his expense, Dan, the Swede, Brown and himself taking a hand in the operation.

Receiving his delivery receipt from the firm which had contracted for the shingles, Jasper lost no time in putting the Sally Ann's head for Erie.

Arriving in port, the schooner was hauled under the coal company's chutes without delay, and while she was taking her load aboard Jasper called on Mr. Woodman and gave him an account of his first trip on his own account.

"You've started in well, Mr. Haverstraw," said the vessel agent, approvingly. "According to your statement, I see you've made an initial profit of \$190. Very good, indeed, especially at the rate you've been working on. But you can't expect to do as well on every trip. Luck has played right with you, even to the extent of saving your life when you went overboard. Have you notified the police here yet about those rascals?"

"No, sir; not yet."

"You'd better do so at once, then."

"That is my intention."

Accordingly, when Jasper left Mr. Woodman's office he went direct to police headquarters and reported that he had unwittingly carried the two escaped jail-birds to Canada, where, he believed, they were still at large.

The information was in the Erie papers that afternoon, together with the account of his own thrilling adventure; but by that time the Sally Ann was going out of the port in the wake of a tug, with her third cargo of coal aboard for Port Edward.

For the next thirty days the schooner plied back and forth, with varying degrees of prosperity, and the young

cargo contractor had more than one chance of finding out the unfavorable side of the business.

But, on the whole, the boy was satisfied with the gross results so far, though he picked up very little freight on the Canadian side, and more times than not he came back to Erie as empty as a cockle-shell.

On arriving at Port Edward with his thirteenth load of coal one morning early in May, he found a telegram from Mr. Woodman awaiting him.

It read as follows:

"MR. JASPER HAVERSTRAW:

"Have secured you lumber charter, half million feet, planed, from Dominion Mill, Clifton's Creek, near Port Edward, to Hawkin's Dock, Buffalo, at \$1 thousand, free in and out, good dispatch both ends.

"JOHN WOODMAN."

"By George, this is fine!" exclaimed the boy, and he hastened to show the dispatch to Dan.

Tucker congratulated him, but added:

"You'll have to hustle for another coal contract, old man. Seven more trips will wind you up, and you don't want to have to cross light in order to carry out this lumber charter, which you'll have to do next month unless you get another coal charter."

"That's all right. Mr. Woodman notified me yesterday morning, when I saw him, that he as good as had another one ready for me at an advanced rate, and free both ends at that."

"If that's the case you're all right," replied Dan, in a tone of satisfaction.

"Well, I'm not letting any grass grow under my feet, Dan."

"I believe you. If more people had your ambition there would be fewer human failures hanging around the city parks and lodging houses."

"If a fellow doesn't learn to hustle when he's young the chances are he'll find the road hard to travel when the years begin to accumulate upon his head."

"The highway to the poorhouse is full of such chaps as Higgings, who owns this schooner. I wouldn't be surprised if that's where he will wind up his days."

"There are others—Mr. Craddock, for example."

"Your Erie relative?"

"Exactly. He and honest labor are on bad terms. I wouldn't want to live like he does for any length of time for a farm."

"I should think not."

"Now, Dan, have you any idea where Clifton's Creek is, where the Dominion Planing Mill is located?"

"Sure thing. Right over yonder, about three miles from here."

"All right; I'll arrange with a tug to tow us over to their wharf."

Jasper attended to the matter right away, and then telegraphed to the manager of the mill when the Sally Ann might be expected to arrive.



They started for the place about four o'clock in the afternoon, and found the mill lay some distance up the creek in question.

It was dark when they arrived.

The mill was erected in a clearing entirely surrounded by a thick wood which extended some distance inland.

The wharf was at the head of the creek, which had been dredged to obtain a depth of water sufficient to float the largest size of four-and-aft craft.

It was a lonesome spot, particularly after nightfall.

On the evening of their arrival there was no moon, the sky was overcast and threatened rain, and the wind souged mournfully through the trees.

"This is a peachy spot, isn't it?" Jasper remarked to Dan, as they were standing on deck, after the schooner had been made fast to the wharf, and they were waiting for the Swede cook to call them to supper.

"That's what it is. I don't know of any place along shore on our side of the lake anywhere like it. It looks weird and spooky."

"Canada isn't like the United States. There's lots more room here to move around."

Then the evening meal was announced as ready, and the boys sought the deck house.

After supper, Jasper went up to the manager's cottage to consult him on a matter connected with the lumber charter.

It only took a few minutes, then the gentleman insisted on introducing the boy to his wife and daughters.

The girls played and sang, Jasper was induced to sing something, too, so that a couple of hours flew by very pleasantly indeed.

The little cuckoo clock on the parlor mantel chimed ten when Haverstraw finally got up and bade the hospitable family good night.

He had to follow a path which led past the big mill building into the roadway communicating with the wharf.

At the door of the engine-room the shadowy form of a man was lighting his pipe.

This was the watchman.

Jasper stopped and spoke to him and then went on down the road.

The wharf was piled high with planed lumber waiting to be shipped.

There wasn't a soul in sight.

The whole aspect of the place was dreary and desolate, made more so by the mist, which blotted out the surface of the water, and the wind, which was steadily rising.

As Jasper turned into an opening left in the timber piles to walk aboard the schooner, two dark forms rose from a crouching attitude directly in his path.

In a moment he was seized and borne to the dock.

### CHAPTER XIII.

#### THE HUT IN THE WOODS.

Jasper was bound hand and foot, while one of the men held his hand over the boy's mouth to prevent him from making an outcry.

Then he was gagged, carried across to the other side of the wharf and dropped into a boat.

The men got in, too, pushed off from the wharf and allowed the boat to drift a little distance away before one of them got out a pair of oars and began to row in a leisurely manner.

Just then it began to rain.

"Curse the weather!" growled the fellow at the oars, and Jasper was certain it was the voice of Snorker.

The other man, who sat in the stern, and guided the boat across the creek, quite wide at this point, said nothing.

In a few minutes they reached the other bank and the men disembarked, taking the boy with them.

They picked him up between them, as if he were a bundle of merchandise, and started to penetrate the blackness of the wood by a winding path with which they seemed to be familiar.

They went on this way for possibly a mile when they came out into a small clearing, in the center of which was a dark patch, which soon resolved itself into a miserable hovel.

Entering the hut, they laid their burden upon the floor.

One closed the door and propped it with a big stick, the other struck a match and lighted a bit of candle stuck into the neck of a whiskey bottle which stood on a weather-beaten box in the middle of the hut.

Jasper had a chance now to view his captors, and the suspicion he had formed of their identity was confirmed.

No beards now disguised their villainous countenances.

They looked just as they did on the night they visited the Woodman home to rob the house, except a trifle more haggard and disreputable.

Snorker and Huskey, beyond a doubt.

The former yanked their prisoner into a sitting posture and propped him up against one of the walls of the hovel.

"You seem to have more lives than a cat, yonger," he said, with a malicious grin, as he removed the gag from Jasper's mouth. "How did yer manage to escape after I chucked yer overboard that mornin', three miles from shore, with yer hands tied behind yer? Say, how did yer do it?"

"It wouldn't interest you to know," replied Haverstraw, curtly, for he didn't mean to gratify Snorker's curiosity.

"How do you know it wouldn't?"

The boy made no reply.

"Sulky, are yer?" replied the villain, angrily. "Well, don't flatter yerself yer'll escape again. We're goin' to do yer up this time for keeps. Yer ain't got no more chance ag'in us than——"

"Hush!" cried Huskey, in a hoarse whisper.

"What's the matter with you?" growled Snorker, turning his head and looking at his companion.

"I heard a noise outside."

"Yer heard the wind or the rain, yer fool," snorted the other, impatiently.

Huskey crept to the door and listened.

Snorker, however, paid no further attention to him, but began to rifle Jasper's pockets.



He found several American bank-notes, and some odd change, mostly Canadian silver.

"Yer ain't got as much as I thought," he growled, as he pocketed the spoils. "Yer must have made a good thing out'r ketchin' us that night on the avenue, for yer runnin' a schooner on yer own hook, while before that there occasion yer was scratchin' for a livin', or yer wouldn't have been goin' 'round cleanin' sidewalks for the price of a meal and lodgin'."

Huskey evidently concluded he had been mistaken about the noise, for he left the door, went to a shelf in a corner and brought a bottle and a couple of glasses to the box.

He poured himself out a stiff dram, drank it, then filled and lit a dirty pipe.

"I don't see why you two chaps are so sore on me that you're ready to commit the crime of murder to satisfy your animosity," said Jasper, desperately.

"Yer done us up that night when but for yer we'd made an easy haul. Ain't that enough?"

"What good will it do you to injure me? It won't put anything into your pockets."

"We'll have the satisfaction what comes of gettin' square with yer."

"And you are willing to risk the noose for such a thing as that?"

"We ain't worryin' 'bout no noose. No one but ourselves will ever know what happened to yer."

"You forget that there's a Power above that watches over the actions of men."

"We don't take no stock in sich things," sneered Snorker. "It's all bosh."

Jasper made no reply, and the man seized the opportunity to go to the bottle and take a drink.

"Now," said Snorker, after he had drawn the sleeve of his coat across his lips, "we are goin' to——"

The piece of wood which Huskey had placed against the door suddenly slipped and fell to the floor with a crash.

Both men were startled, Huskey especially, for he upset the box.

The bottle holding the candle rolled over against Jasper's leg.

The flame did not go out, but continued to burn up sideways, forming a pool of melted grease beside it.

Snorker uttered a loud oath, rushed to the door, pulled it open and, followed by his companion, dashed out into the night, evidently convinced somebody was outside.

Quick as a flash a plan for freeing himself occurred to Haverstraw.

He worked his body away from the wall and approached his bound wrists to the candle flame.

Though he scorched his flesh in the effort he did not pause till the burning wick was directly under the strands of thin rope.

He was in a fever of excitement lest the rascals should re-enter the hut before he had time to accomplish his purpose.

Every second seemed like an age, until the friendly flame so weakened the strands of the rope that a mighty wrench

on his part snapped his bonds and his hands were free once more.

Turning quickly around he grasped the bottle and held the flame of the candle to the rope which secured his legs.

All the time he heard the two men tramping around the shanty and beating the bushes at the back, under the impression that some one was concealed there.

"If they'll only keep it up long enough," breathed Jasper, nervously, "I'll have a chance for my life."

Two minutes passed, which seemed of interminable length, when the last cord was snapped and Haverstraw stood on his feet with a sigh of thankfulness, a free boy.

But now he heard them coming back from their fruitless quest, Snorker swearing like a trooper.

It was impossible for him to leave the hut before they would be at the door.

The urgency of the case made him think quicker than he had ever done before in his life.

A plan of action, combining surprise, occurred to him on the spur of the moment.

He saw where the heavy bit of wood lay which had formed the door prop, the displacement of which had alarmed the rascals.

He put out the candle, sprang forward and seized the piece of wood, and drew back in the darkness beside the door.

Hardly had he accomplished this move when Huskey entered the hut.

"The candle is out," he growled.

Immediately behind him came the more dangerous scoundrel—Snorker.

Jasper raised the weapon of wood he held and brought it down on the fellow's head with all his might.

Snorker dropped like a stunned ox in the shambles, rolled over on his back, and lay quite still.

"What's the matter?" gasped Huskey, in a frightened voice, for though he had not seen the shadowy action of the boy in the gloom, he felt all was not right.

Jasper had no fear of him, for he believed him to be a rank coward.

But he wasn't taking any chances just then.

He could not tell how badly crippled Snorker was, and he knew that to save himself he must act promptly.

So he lifted the stick again, rushed at the spot whence came Huskey's voice, and struck downward.

A terrible yell and a fall showed he had hit his mark.

Then he struck out a second time, and Huskey lay back on the floor, stunned.

"I hope I haven't killed or fatally hurt either of them, though heaven knows they deserve all I have given them," thought the brave boy, as he stood there in the darkness and listened in vain for some move on the part of the rascals.

"They're safe for the present, I guess," he added. "I'll light the candle."

He walked over to the side of the shanty where he remembered setting down the bottle after he had extinguished the light.



After fumbling around a bit he found it, and then he went to the spot where the box had been overturned and felt for the two matches which Huskey had laid upon it.

It took some little time and careful searching before he finally recovered one of the matches.

Then he lit the candle and surveyed the scene of slaughter.

Snorker was bleeding from an ugly gash on his head.

Jasper did not believe that he was seriously injured, so as a wise precaution he took some of the rope they had employed to bind him and tied the rascal's hands good and tight behind him.

After that he secured his ankles in the same way.

He had enough rope left to tie Huskey's hands and used it for that purpose.

"I'll put the length of the room between the two rascals, then I'll try to find my way to the schooner and fetch the hands back with me to take charge of the villains. Once I get them on board I'll see they get back to the other side of the lake all right, and save all extradition red tape business."

Extinguishing the light once more he left the hut and the unconscious villains to themselves, taking the path he saw led through the woods, and followed it carefully till he reached the shore of the creek at the very spot the rascals had landed.

The boat was where they left it, among the reeds.

Jasper got in and rowed through the mist and drizzling rain in the direction he guessed the wharf to be.

He didn't go far out of the way, striking the other side of the creek above the wharf.

Locating the Sally Ann, he rowed alongside and climbed on board.

He at once aroused Skipper Brown and hurriedly told his story in outline.

Dan and the Swede were awakened and told what was before them.

Then the party of four, guided by Jasper, rowed across the creek, marched to the hut and found the ruffians still unconscious.

They were carefully bound with fresh rope and carried back to the schooner, where they were deposited for the night in the main hold.

Then all hands turned in again, Jasper devoutly grateful to heaven for having escaped the fate Snorker and Huskey had designed for him.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### PUSHING IT THROUGH.

Next morning a prison pen was fixed up in the hold for the special accommodation of Snorker and Huskey, who were found to have fully recovered from the hard blows dealt out to them by Jasper in the shanty of the woods.

They were informed that they were to be transported back to Erie, via the Buffalo authorities.

They received the information with sullen indifference.

The weather had cleared off before sunrise, and the day promised to be a fine one.

The loading commenced at seven o'clock, and before noon the Sally Ann had as many feet of planed timber on board as she could safely carry.

While all hands were eating dinner the tug that was to tow them out of the creek and down the harbor to an offing appeared.

She made fast, the shore lines were cast off, and presently they were gliding down the stream of water toward the harbor.

By two o'clock, with a fair slant of wind, the schooner parted from the tug and pointed her nose southeast for Buffalo.

Being heavily laden, she proceeded at a much slower rate than was customary with her, for ordinarily the Sally Ann was a smart sailer.

"At this rate it will take us nearly two days to reach Buffalo, don't you think, Dan?" said Jasper, when they were about five miles off shore.

"It all depends on whether the wind holds fair all the way over, or whether it shifts and heads us. In the latter case we'll be obliged to tack often, which means that we'll have to cover a great many extra miles. That will lengthen the trip out, of course."

When the sun went down the wind lost a good bit of its weight, too, and the Sally Ann moved more sluggishly through the water.

This fact was particularly noticeable when one of the Buffalo & Cleveland Transportation Company's steamers hove in sight, rapidly overhauled them, and went by as if the schooner was at anchor.

The wind continued to fine down as darkness spread over the surface of the lake, and when the moon peeped above the watery horizon at nine o'clock the Sally Ann had scarcely any headway on her.

Jasper, with Dan and the Swede, was in the watch between midnight and four in the morning.

The boy had learned to stand his trick at the wheel, same as the others.

This night it was his turn to lead off at the binnacle, and as there was absolutely nothing to do, Dan and the Swede lay off on the forecastle deck and went to sleep, though it was their duty to keep awake.

Jasper, having no one to talk to, and scarcely anything to engage his attention, began himself to nod over the wheel.

There was a clear view to the horizon all around the schooner, and only a single sail was in view, miles away, to the southwest.

It was at this stage of the game that a head was thrust up through the forward hatch, close to the foremast, which had been left uncovered to admit air to the prisoners below.

All around this hatch several thousand feet of lumber



filled the deck space between the deck house aft and the small forecandle hatch close to the bowsprit.

A body followed the head and soon the figure of a man stood in the shadow of the timber piles.

In another moment a second figure joined him from the depths of the hold.

Cautiously they crawled upon the top of the timber and worked their way forward on their stomachs like a couple of snakes.

As the moonlight shone on their evil-looking faces, any one who had ever seen them before would have recognized Snorker and Huskey, who, in some unaccountable way, had managed to escape from their prison pen in the hold.

They looked decidedly dangerous as they leaned over the forward end of the lumber piles and took note of the two sleeping members of the mid-watch stretched out near the forecandle hatch.

The rascals consulted in low tones, then slipped down off the lumber, grabbed the Swede suddenly and threw him bodily down into the shallow forecandle.

The shock stunned him and he made no outcry. Dan Tucker was treated to a similar bit of experience, but as he fell on top of his comrade he escaped without a scratch.

As soon as Snorker and Huskey had disposed of the two members of the crew, they clapped the cover on the hatch and threw a couple of coils of the anchor chain upon it.

They stood awhile watching the efforts of Dan, assisted by one of the watch below, to lift the hatch cover.

Satisfied those below would not succeed in displacing it, the two scoundrels climbed upon the lumber again and made their way aft.

Keeping in the shadow of the deck house after leaving the lumber, they crept along until Snorker, who was in advance, poked his head around the corner of the cabin and got a sight of the man at the wheel.

He uttered a low grunt of satisfaction when he saw it was Haverstraw, the one person on board he hated with a malignant intensity.

He grinned fiendishly as he observed the boy's half drowsy condition.

It seemed as if fate was playing into their hands.

Snorker turned back and held another whispered conversation with his pal.

Whatever plan they had in view it probably carried with it the death of the young cargo contractor, who had already twice escaped their deadly intentions.

At length Snorker rose to his feet, and after taking one more look at the boy, dashed out upon him from the shelter of the deck house.

Providence, however, was watching over Jasper Haverstraw.

Some floating object, it might have been a water-soaked log, struck the schooner's rudder at that critical moment, and the wheel gave a vigorous kick.

This aroused the boy from the drowsy spell creeping over his senses.

He looked up in time to notice the figure that was springing upon him.

The glare of the moonlight showed him, to his intense surprise, the murderous countenance of Snorker, and the equally baleful face of Huskey directly behind.

Snorker was right upon him when Jasper realized his peril.

The boy ducked to one side just in the nick of time to avoid the fellow's impetuous rush.

Snorker's outstretched hands missing their intended object, clutched at the wheel to recover his balance.

But his fingers slipped from the smooth spokes, as if they were greased, and at the same time one of his feet catching in the rudder chain, he pitched forward, with a hoarse cry.

It was the last he ever uttered, for the momentum of his body carried him over the low rail at the schooner's stern, and he fell with a loud splash into the water, leaving an ever-widening succession of circles upon the surface above where he had gone down.

He must have sunk like a stone, and remained at the bottom, for that was the last ever seen of the scoundrel.

The world was well rid of him.

As for Huskey, he stopped short, paralyzed by the fate which had overtaken his associate in guilt, and before he recovered, Jasper floored him to the deck with a heavy blow on the jaw.

"Don't hit me again! I give up!" begged the rascal, as Jasper stood over him with his fists clenched.

"Don't you dare get up, then, till I give you leave. How did you two get out of that pen we fixed up for you?"

"Snorker managed it by main strength," whined Huskey.

"I suppose you intended to do me up, then take to the boat and try to escape."

Huskey wouldn't admit that such were their intentions, but Jasper was confident of it just the same.

"Dan! Jansen!" called out Jasper.

"It wouldn't do you no good to call 'em," interposed Huskey, sulkily.

"What do you mean by that?" asked the boy, in some surprise.

"Snorker and me found 'em asleep for'ard, and we jest chucked 'em down into the hatch, put the cover on, and the anchor chain on top of that to keep it down."

"You did that, eh?"

"Yep."

Jasper stepped to the cabin door and aroused Skipper Brown.

"It ain't time to turn out, is it?" asked Brown, sleepily.

"No; but our prisoners have broken out of their caboose, and I've got one of them here. I want you to fetch a piece of rope to bind his hands."

That piece of news brought the skipper to his senses, and presently Huskey was secured so he couldn't make any more trouble.

"Where's the other chap?" asked Brown, looking around.

"Gone overboard," replied Jasper, tersely.



"You don't mean he's drowned?"

"That's what I do mean," and he gave the skipper an account of how the affair happened.

"I guess he won't be missed any," commented Brown. "He was one of the hardest nuts I ever ran against, and I've seen some pretty tough ones."

"I must go for'ard and liberate Dan and Jansen," said Jasper.

"What's the matter with them?"

"Those chaps caught them napping, threw them down the fore-castle hatch, put the cover on and secured it."

Haverstraw climbed over the lumber, removed the coils of iron chain, and let out the mystified members of his watch.

Jansen had recovered his senses, but he had a large and painful lump on his forehead, and was mighty angry over the treatment he had received.

After the cause of it all had been explained, he wanted to take satisfaction out of Huskey, but to this Jasper would not consent.

The Sally Ann duly arrived at Buffalo, and while the lumber was being unloaded, a couple of policemen came down on the wharf, in response to a telephone message, and took Huskey into custody.

Next day he was taken back to Erie by a detective sent to Buffalo for that purpose, and in the course of time was tried for the Woodman house burglary, convicted and sent to State Prison for five years.

From Buffalo the schooner returned light to Erie and proceeded to take on board her fourteenth load of coal of the Bimler charter.

When Jasper visited Mr. Woodman he found that gentleman had secured for him a new contract to carry 20,000 tons across, free loading and discharging, at \$1.25 per ton.

This, of course, was bound to be much more profitable than his original charter, and he was naturally highly elated.

The very first thing he did was to hurry up to the Blank Avenue house to acquaint Mabel Channing with the news of his good fortune.

Of course, she was very glad to hear of his success, indeed, she had come to feel a wonderfully strong interest in his affairs.

As for Jasper Haverstraw, he had long since reached the conclusion that there wasn't another girl in the world like Mrs. Woodman's lovely niece.

From this time on they were almost constantly in each other's company when Jasper was in Erie.

"Don't you think Mr. Haverstraw is an uncommonly bright young man?" asked Mrs. Woodman of her husband one evening in the summer.

"He certainly is," he replied, in a tone which left no doubt as to his meaning it. "He went into the cargo contracting business with a vim that surprised me, considering his age, and he has since pushed it through for all that it's worth. He's making money fast, and there's no reason why he shouldn't be rich some day. He repaid me every cent he owed me."

"He thinks a great deal of our Mabel."

"I've noticed that he does."

"And she—well, I'm sure they'll make a match of it."

"She couldn't marry a young fellow with brighter prospects," replied the vessel agent, nodding his head, sagely.

Jasper averaged a profit of \$150 a trip on the Bimler contract, not including the profits of the lumber charter, which amounted to \$75 more.

When he began on his second coal contract of 20,000, his profits rose 35 cents per ton, or nearly \$75 extra per trip from Erie to Port Edward.

He closed his first season as a cargo contractor with a net profit of \$3,400.

He did even better on his second season, and still better on his third, at the close of which he had nearly \$20,000 to his credit in bank.

He thought this a good foundation on which to start a home for himself, and easily persuaded Mable Channing to go into a matrimonial partnership with him.

He began his fourth year with a brand new schooner of 350 tons, which Mrs. Haverstraw, at her husband's particular request, christened the Mabel Channing.

To-day Jasper is regarded as one of Erie's first citizens, and the handsome home in which he resides with his charming wife and children, speaks well for his solid financial standing in the community.

His career is only one of the many instances we could mention of American boys who started out in life with not a dollar to their name, but who, by their energy and ambition, succeeded in starting a business for themselves and then PUSHING IT THROUGH to success.

THE END.

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